

CHAPTER 12

SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

12.1 Introduction

In 2004, several major challenges emerged that the Department of Education (DOE), the Juvenile Justice Education Enhancement Program (JJEED), school districts, and educational program providers were able to successfully confront through effective cooperation and collaboration. The year 2005 poses a series of continuing challenges as Florida and the rest of the country attempt to successfully implement the multiple juvenile justice education requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). What is clearly evident from JJEED's seven years of experience is that we will be successful in meeting these new challenges, provided that we continue building consensus and collaboration between state and local agencies involved in juvenile justice education. NCLB raises unprecedented educational challenges, in juvenile justice and public schools alike, that mandate cooperation and collaboration.

What is very promising is that in Florida, we are seeing many direct benefits from the past seven years of annually raising the expectations and requirements of juvenile justice educational programs. Specifically, by improving the quality of juvenile justice educational programs and the academic achievement of incarcerated students, positive alteration of their previous pattern of school failure is being achieved, and associated delinquent behavior is being substantially reduced.

This chapter is comprised of two subsequent sections. Section 12.2 provides summaries of Chapters 2 through 11, and Section 12.3 draws several conclusions from these chapters.

12.2 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 2 identifies and describes several important legislative actions affecting juvenile justice education in Florida. In addition, the chapter describes JJEED's positive and effective role in shaping and responding to these legislative changes through cooperation and collaboration between JJEED, DOE, school districts, and educational program providers.

Chapter 3 presents the results of the 2004 quality assurance (QA) review cycle. Detention centers achieved the highest overall scores of the three types of educational programs reviewed (detention, day treatment, and residential). The highest rated standard was service delivery, while the lowest rated standard was transition. Similarly, the transition benchmarks, particularly Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) participation, had the lowest pass rates. In contrast, the contract management benchmarks had relatively high pass rates. In addition, personnel qualification and professional certification scored the highest among indicators, while testing and assessment scored the lowest. Overall, of the

188 reviewed programs, 58 (31%) scored in the high satisfactory or superior range, while 18 (10%) programs scored in the below satisfactory range.

Chapter 4 describes JJEEP's technical assistance functions, placing particular emphasis on the impact of NCLB on the number of programs requiring technical assistance. Specifically, data indicate that an increasing number of programs received below satisfactory scores on various indicators and, consequently, an increasing number of programs received corrective action. Despite raising expectations and requirements, most programs that received technical assistance did, in fact, improve their performance.

Chapter 5 identifies significant correlates of quality education. These include: the proportion of teachers with professional certification, average years of teaching, average months of teaching in a specific program, and the proportion of in-field teachers. Policy implications based on these results were also discussed.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a national survey. A major goal of Chapter 6 was to compare Florida to other states in the nation. The chapter revealed that, compared to other states, Florida is somewhat less fragmented, has made more progress in implementing NCLB requirements, has a more rigorous evaluation process, and imposes more sanctions for poor program performance.

Chapter 7 extends the community reintegration findings for Cohort 1, namely, those students who were released from juvenile justice residential programs during FY 2000-01. Among the findings reported is that students who sustained their public school participation through one year were 41% less likely to be rearrested as compared to those students who did not remain in public schools. Further, students who stayed in public schools for two years after their release from a residential program were 57% less likely to be rearrested as compared to those who did not stay in school. The findings clearly support the positive community reintegration role of higher academic achievement while incarcerated and returning to and staying in school following release.

Chapter 8 presents community reintegration findings for Cohort 2 that are intended to replicate the major methods and analyses used in Cohort 1. Cohort 2 involves 5,254 students who were released from juvenile justice residential programs during FY 2001-02. Consistent with the findings from Cohort 1, the Cohort 2 findings demonstrate that higher levels of academic achievement while incarcerated significantly increase the likelihood of students returning to public schools following their release from a juvenile justice residential program. Cohort 2 students, like Cohort 1 students, who earned a diploma while incarcerated were less likely to be rearrested following their release. Additionally, those Cohort 2 students, as in the case of Cohort 1, who returned to school with above average attendance were much less likely to be rearrested than those who did not return to school. In sum, the findings from Cohort 2 replicate our findings from Cohort 1 and, together, strongly support the role of academic achievement as a positive turning point in the lives of many delinquent youths.

Chapter 9 presents the results of three years of QA reviews of two alternative education schools in Volusia County. Although this pilot project is only three years old, both of the

county's alternative schools have implemented a number of changes that JJEEP has recommended as a result of the first two QA reviews; consequently, both schools demonstrated marked improvement. Among the more significant changes were the implementation of school councils and an increase in linking the schools with the larger community. Both schools showed some weaknesses in areas such as the development and use of individual academic plans (IAPs).

Chapter 10 presents findings from three case studies of high performing programs. The chapter presented five key areas of best practices: school environment, assessment and student planning, curriculum and instruction, transition and aftercare, and teacher quality and professional development. Observations, supplemented by teacher and student surveys, confirmed that these three programs excel in all five key areas.

Chapter 11 describes JJEEP's role in creating and improving an information-driven juvenile justice education policy in Florida. JJEEP's past, present, and future data-driven initiatives were discussed, and the impacts of these initiatives on Florida's juvenile justice education system were presented.

12.3 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In relation to JJEEP's four specific functions, the following concluding comments can be drawn from our 2004 program efforts.

I. Quality Assurance

Since 1998, JJEEP has continued to increase and improve upon its QA expectations and processes for Florida's approximately 200 juvenile justice educational programs. As a result of these continuous QA improvements, Florida is well positioned to successfully confront the accountability related requirements of NCLB.

II. Technical Assistance

Throughout the past seven years, JJEEP's technical assistance efforts have been proven effective. Specifically, providing onsite, targeted assistance has been successful in improving deficient areas in different juvenile justice educational programs throughout the state. Moreover, through our technical assistance efforts and annual QA standards revisions, JJEEP, the Florida Department of Education (DOE), school districts, and individual educational programs have developed an effective and ongoing collaborative undertaking that is successful in improving educational program quality and students' levels of academic achievement and community reintegration prospects.

III. Research

JJEEP's research has guided all of our program efforts related to QA, technical assistance, and policy. As a result of our ongoing longitudinal studies, we now can show that Florida's

sustained and unprecedented commitment to quality and accountable juvenile justice education is, indeed, effective in positively changing the lives of numerous juvenile justice youths as measured by their community reintegration outcomes.

IV. Policy

Beginning in 1998, and each year thereafter, JJEEP has been able to guide Florida's juvenile justice education policies. Collaboration has been the key to our success in bridging the traditional research and policy divide. In recognition of this success, the JJEEP model is now being promoted as an exemplary state system for juvenile justice education. We look forward to sharing our experiences with other states as we all embrace and implement the requirements of NCLB.