

# Chapter 9

## Summaries and Conclusions

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This 2006 Annual Report marks nine years of Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEEP) operations. Over these years, JJEEP has implemented a series of interrelated functions that include conducting research and quality assurance (QA) reviews and providing technical assistance (TA) and policy recommendations. The successful implementation of these interrelated functions has resulted in continuous improvement in the quality of services and practices in Florida's juvenile justice education programs. In addition, Florida State University's Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research, which administers JJEEP, has been awarded two Congressional grants to assist other states in their respective implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requirements for their juvenile justice schools. These awards recognize the importance and value of Florida's unique research-driven and continuous quality improvement approach to juvenile justice education.

Despite the disproportionate educational deficiencies that characterize delinquent youths, the delivery of quality educational programs and services is providing many of Florida's delinquents with opportunities to transition from delinquency.

### 9.2 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 2 presents the QA results of the 161 programs in 46 school districts that were reviewed during the 2006 review cycle. The analysis of QA scores for 2006 demonstrates that the overall mean slightly decreased compared with the overall mean in 2005. In 2006, 53 programs (33%) scored in the high *satisfactory* or *superior* range, and 23 programs (14%) scored in the *below satisfactory* range. Although the number of failing programs increased from the previous year, the number of high performing programs also increased. Overall, the 2006 program performance had a fairly equal distribution of high- and low-performing programs.

Four new programs achieved *exemplary* program status in 2006 resulting in 26 programs having exemplary status for the 2007-2008 QA review cycle. High performing school districts in 2006 include Collier, Hardee, Okaloosa, Volusia, and Walton counties. Specific performance results demonstrate that programs had the most difficulty in meeting the indicator requirements for School District Monitoring, Reading Curriculum & Instruction, and Student Planning.

Chapter 3 provides results of JJEEP's technical assistance and corrective action efforts. More than 300 participants, 13 exhibitors, and 69 presenters participated in the 9th Annual Juvenile Justice Education Institute (JJEI) and Southern Conference on Corrections in July. In addition to TA offered at the statewide conference, on-site TA was provided to 21 programs and school districts during 2006; the majority of programs that received on-site

TA visits in 2005 demonstrated improvement in their 2006 QA scores. Future TA will emphasize school district involvement to improve habitually low-performing programs.

In 2006, 23 programs received overall failing scores (below 4.00) and 11 programs failed the same standard for the second consecutive year, which may result in intervention and/or sanctions from the Department of Education (DOE). 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 in 2006, followed by service delivery (25) and educational resources (18). The 23 programs that failed overall comprise the majority of these below satisfactory findings in specific standards.

Chapter 4 provides trend information on teachers working in juvenile justice education programs throughout the state. Although there is a slight decrease in 2006, the percentage of teachers with professional certification has increased from 55% in 2001 to 60% in 2006. Similarly, in all core academic areas, the percentage of in-field teachers has increased between 2001 and 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 some progress, out-of-field teaching remains a major 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 less than one year.

Chapter 5 summarizes the review of literature exploring relationships among education, employment, and recidivism for adult and juvenile offenders. Overall, prior research findings demonstrate that higher levels of educational attainment reduce the likelihood of recidivism for both adults and juveniles. In particular, studies that have examined the effect of earning a standard high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) diploma found significant reductions in recidivism for both adults and juveniles.

In addition, educational attainment affects future employment opportunities, resulting in a possible indirect effect on recidivism for older youth and young adults. However, the findings on employment for younger adolescents who have not completed high school are mixed, possibly indicating that employment is not as effective as education for younger youth who have not completed high school.

Studies focusing on adolescent delinquents found that most do not graduate from high school or earn a GED diploma while committed. In addition, many of these school-aged youth do not return to school upon release or drop out prior to graduating. Moreover, many of the prior studies found individual and community level factors that impact both educational attainment and employment. Among these factors were minority status, socioeconomic status, and community disorganization.

Chapter 6 provides findings from a longitudinal analysis of youth outcomes that were released from residential programs in FY 2000-2001. Although there is an overall recidivism rate of 70% within three years post release, the findings also indicate that youths benefit from educational gains while committed as they are more likely to attend school upon release, earn a high school diploma or its equivalent, and maintain employment. Factors such as earning a diploma, sustaining attendance in school, and maintaining employment reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

The findings also reveal significant differences in post-release trajectories for youth 15 years old and younger and youth 16 years old and older. Older youth are less likely to return to school after release, but simultaneously are more likely to be employed. And although younger youth are more likely to attend school after release, many school-aged youth never return to school or return and dropout before graduating. Youth with EBD and SLD are returning to school at high rates but they are not persisting in school for durations sufficient to earn a diploma, and 66% of the cohort who attain a diploma earn a GED. These results demonstrate that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to educational and career preparation with committed youth will not be effective.

Chapter 7 compares the educational characteristics of male and female youth who were committed to residential programs in 2002-2003. The findings suggest that male and female juvenile delinquents exhibit a fairly significant difference in prior public school performance and in credits and diplomas earned during their commitment. In addition, 51% of the male sample were found to have a disability compared to only 35% of the female sample.

Females in residential programs had higher incoming grade point averages (GPAs) than their male counterparts and were significantly more likely to be on or above their age-appropriate grade levels. During commitment, females earned slightly more credits per student than did males. While males and females earned the same proportion of core academic credits, females earned significantly more elective credits than career/technical credits, while the opposite was true for males.

Chapter 8 describes JJEEP’s future research and activities. In terms of JJEEP’s QA review function, the upcoming year will bring many changes. These include moving the review year from a calendar year cycle to a fiscal year cycle. For the 2007-2008 QA review cycle, QA performance trend data—in conjunction with state student-level data—will produce program profiles, which will supply programs and school districts with additional information to facilitate evaluation, and decision-making processes.

QA performance data and best practices research will continue to inform the standards revision process and rating guidelines. Student performance data will be further enhanced with the July 2006 implementation of the common academic (entry and exit) assessment administered to students in juvenile justice programs. Student academic gains data will provide another component to JJEEP’s program evaluation process. In addition, JJEEP’s guidelines specify that intensive TA will be provided to lower-performing programs and include collaboration among DOE, program, and school district personnel and reviewers to ensure that systemic issues are addressed.

### 9.3 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Although 26 of the 161 programs reviewed in 2006 earned or maintained their exemplary status, several low-performing programs struggled to meet many of the educational QA requirements. Forty-seven programs received CAPs with 23 receiving overall failing scores; 11 now require follow-up intervention and/or sanctions from the Department of Education (DOE). The majority of these low performing programs have a history of *below satisfactory* performance, and several have experienced provider and high staff and teacher turnover. As a result of these programs’ low-performance trends, JJEEP and DOE have initiated extensive

technical assistance in the spring of 2007 with emphasis upon on-site visits that include meetings with school district officials and superintendents when possible.

Each program that received overall failing scores in 2006 will receive an on-site TA visit in 2007. These visits are intended to identify system issues that have contributed to the programs' low performance. The visits are also intended to establish communication among the program, supervising school district, education provider, and facility provider in an effort to correct systemic issues that have contributed to low performance. The impact of site visits to improve program performance may be reflected in the programs' scores in the 2007-2008 QA review cycle.

DOE has also worked with several school districts that have low-performing programs, often resulting in changes in the administrative structure of the educational services that the students receive. For example, Seminole County Schools canceled contracts with educational providers and plans to provide the educational services in their juvenile justice programs in the 2007-2008 school year. Leon County Schools is also piloting a new educational service delivery model by allowing low-risk residential students to attend a publicly-operated alternative school in the district rather than receiving education services at the juvenile justice facility. In addition, each of the programs that received a corrective action plan (CAP) in 2006 will receive follow-up throughout the 2007-2008 QA review cycle.

In terms of policy implications, JJEEP's longitudinal research has identified several key factors associated with the education of committed youth and their desistance from delinquent behavior. 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, several policy implications emerge.

First, appropriate and differentiated educational services should be provided to youth while they are committed. For example, younger youth should receive strong academic instruction that is aligned with the student's home school district and transition support services that provide assistance in returning to school upon release. When appropriate, older youth should focus upon the attainment of a GED and career education when returning to school is determined to be unlikely.

Second, simply returning to school or obtaining employment upon release is not enough to impact the delinquent trajectories of youth. Post-release, community and school support protocols are needed for youth returning from residential care to assist youth with attending school on a regular basis and maintaining employment. These post-release support services should focus upon 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.

The 2007-2008 educational QA standards include new community reintegration requirements that will assess how school districts are providing support for youth as they return from commitment facilities and attempt to re-enter public schools. As school districts develop and evaluate their protocols and policies for school re-entry and support

services, JJEEP will be better able to identify effective re-entry support services that assist youth in maintaining school attendance and eventual graduation.

