

# EDJJ NOTES

A publication of the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice  
January, 2002

[www.edjj.org](http://www.edjj.org)

Volume 1, Number 3

## In the News

### **Characteristics of Youth and Educational Programming in Juvenile Corrections**

Approximately 108,931 youth in the U.S. are in residential placement.<sup>1</sup> For adolescents, education is an important component of effective rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. When developing and improving the academic programs offered in these settings, it is necessary to identify trends in student academic skills, experience, and competencies.<sup>2</sup> Further, a synthesis of available information on educational programs is essential to ascertain the extent to which educational opportunities match student needs.

Foley (2001) recently reviewed the literature on student academic characteristics and traits of educational programs within juvenile corrections. Following a comprehensive search, she reviewed twenty studies. Major findings from her review are summarized below.

#### **Student Characteristics**

Youth in juvenile corrections commonly have a below average to average IQ score, with a higher performance than verbal score. Additionally, nonrecidivists have significantly higher verbal scores than youth who recidivate.

Consistently, detained and committed youth score below their expected grade

levels across subject areas. For example youth typically score between grades 5-7 and 5-6 in reading and written language, respectively. Similarly, youth score between grades 5-9 in math. An estimated 38% of incarcerated youth also qualify for speech and language services.

Detained and committed youth commonly have a history of school failure. For example, approximately 75% of these youth fail one or more courses. Additionally, 40-50% are retained in grade. In one study reviewed,<sup>3</sup> over a three-year period, 40% of youth who entered correctional facilities had earned no high school credits. Despite these unsuccessful histories, many Youth report having a positive attitude toward school and realize its importance.

*(Article continues)*

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

- **Characteristics of Youth and Educational Programming in Juvenile Corrections**
- **Wraparound Milwaukee**
- **Research to Practice: Notetaking**
- **Parents and Families: Parent Participation and IEP's**

**About EDJJ**

EDJJ is a technical assistance, training, research, and dissemination center designed to develop more effective responses to the needs of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system and those at-risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The center is a collaborative project of the University of Maryland, University of Kentucky, Arizona State University, American Institutes for Research, and The Pacer Center.

### **Program Characteristics**

Effective correctional education programs require, "a valid assessment system, a broad array of curricular options, and a set of highly efficient and effective instructional strategies (p. 253)."<sup>4</sup> Foley reviewed three assessment models: (a) the diagnostic classroom model; (b) computer adaptive testing approach; and (c) the screening-intervention model. The diagnostic classroom model includes a comprehensive battery of assessments for students including psycho-educational, health, language, academic skills, vocational aptitude and interest, psychosocial strengths and weaknesses, and behavior. This model assures the information necessary to provide an appropriate level of support for each student within a continuum of services.

In contrast, the computer adaptive testing model focuses on identifying levels of student competence (i.e., instructional, independent, or mastery) in reading, language arts, and math. Test items are adjusted by the computer, based on student correct or incorrect response.

The screening-intervention model includes three stages that extend beyond detainment or confinement of the youth. "The initial stage includes individual screening measures to assess intellectual, perceptual, socio-emotional, and academic achievement (p. 254)."<sup>5</sup> The next phase provides a diagnostic testing and teaching cycle with additional vocational and psychological evaluations. Stage three is the responsibility of a designated advocate who monitors the educational and support services the student receives upon release.

In addition to a review of assessment approaches, Foley noted that a range of curriculum options exist. Correctional education programs commonly offer elementary and secondary academic instruction, prevocational and vocational programs, and social skills training. GED

and special education programs are also typically offered.

Foley (2001) points to serious gaps in the research and the fact that many relevant student characteristics and effective programming components have not yet been studied. The current state of knowledge in juvenile correctional education suggests that programs: (a) use existing research on the academic characteristics of students with emotional disorders and learning disabilities (a population that is overrepresented in juvenile corrections); and (b) use components of effective educational programming (e.g., formative and summative assessment, relevant and structured curriculum). Further, the national emphasis on standards and accountability require an evaluation of how these issues are addressed in juvenile corrections and their affect on educational programming for youth in these settings.

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<sup>1</sup> Sickmund, M., & Wan, Y. (2001). *Census of juveniles in residential placement databook*. Retrieved January 6, 2002, from <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/cjrp>

<sup>2</sup> For full text of study, see Foley, R. M. (2001). Academic characteristics of incarcerated youth and correctional educational programs. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 9, 248-259.

<sup>3</sup> Haberman, M., & Quinn, L. M. (1986). The high school re-entry myth: A follow-up study of juveniles released from two correctional high schools in Wisconsin. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 21, 133-140.

<sup>4,5</sup> Id. #2

### **Community-Based Services**

#### **Wraparound Milwaukee**

One effective approach to preventing recidivism among adjudicated youth with emotional, mental health, and behavioral disorders is implementation of integrated services. Wraparound Milwaukee, a system of care initially funded in 1994, integrates mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice,

and educational services for these youth.<sup>1</sup> Numerous challenges exist with interagency collaboration. However, positive outcomes for youth in the program can be attributed to a common set of principles, critical program components, blended funding, and a structure to deal with interagency challenges.

To provide a clear vision across agencies, Wraparound Milwaukee functions under five guiding principles. First, rather than identifying deficits, participating organizations use a strength-based approach to the youth and his/her family. Second, families are actively involved in the treatment process. As such, families are considered a key resource to understanding each youth's needs. Similarly, the third principal identifies family members as the primary experts when conducting need-based service planning and developing methods of service delivery. The fourth principle holds that individualized service plans are necessary to meet the unique needs of each youth and his/her family. The final principle focuses on the necessity for measurable goals that are continually evaluated. It is through objective measures that the effectiveness of the program is observed.

In addition to consistent principles for all participating agencies, Wraparound Milwaukee includes several critical components:

- Care coordination. Services for each child are managed by a primary coordinator who organizes assessments, meetings, and services
- Child and family team. This team consists of each child's immediate and extended family, members of the various organizations, and friends
- Mobile crisis team. Psychologists and social workers provide 24-hour crisis intervention

- Provider network. A group of practitioners offer services on a fee-for-service basis
- Blended funding. Funds from participating agencies are combined to form an insurance pool. The funds are then decategorized to allow the program to use them as needed for each family
- Informal services. In addition to formalized services, other services such as a church group, neighbor, and YMCA program are identified and used.

Wraparound Milwaukee has resulted in several promising outcomes. Youth enrollment in residential treatment and inpatient psychiatric services has decreased by 60% and 80%, respectively. In addition, The overall cost of care per child has been reduced from \$5,000/month to less than \$3,300/month.

However, for such reductions to be socially valid, a decrease in youth recidivism is also necessary. Based on 134 youth, 1 year prior to enrollment and 1 year after, significant reductions occurred in sex offenses, assaults, weapons offenses, property offenses, drug offenses, and other offenses (primarily disorderly conduct not involving a weapon). Although long-term effects of the program are still unknown, these short-term effects are very encouraging.

A number of challenges to interagency collaboration could affect these positive results. Difference in terminology, defining roles, and variations in values are just a few of the issues that require attention. To address these issues, Wraparound Milwaukee includes cross-training, organized communication (e.g., team development, job shadowing, common database for information, sharing literature), and adherence to a common value system that is reinforced at every meeting.

Maintaining community safety is another issue that requires specific planning. To assure the safety of youth in the program and members of the community, Wraparound Milwaukee includes written safety plans and protocols for high-risk youth.

Serving adjudicated youth with emotional, mental health, and behavioral disorders can be a difficult task. The promising results of Wraparound Milwaukee illustrate the potential benefits of using a community-based, multi-agency model to serve these youth.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of Wraparound Milwaukee, see Kamradt, B. (2000). Wraparound Milwaukee: Aiding youth with mental health needs. *Juvenile Justice*, 7 (1), 14-23.

## Research to Practice

### **Notetaking**

Lecture and text-based assignments are common in secondary classrooms. Consequently, notetaking is a necessary skill for academic success.<sup>1</sup> As students take notes, they are actively engaged with the information. This may improve student attention and support the transfer of ideas from short- to long-term memory.<sup>2</sup>

However, within the juvenile corrections classroom two factors contribute to the difficulty of using assignments that require students to take notes: (a) many students in these settings have learning disabilities (LD) or emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD). These students often have difficulties including relevant information and key ideas within their notes;<sup>3</sup> and (b) students within each class may have a wide range of abilities, making it difficult for the teacher to provide a reading assignment or lecture that all students comprehend.

To address these difficulties, teachers can supply organizational support and verbal

cues to assist students and tailor the level of support to individual students. For example, teachers can provide guided notes (i.e., an outline to students with varied levels of cues). Some students may benefit from being given main ideas and expected to identify the relevant details. Other students may need main ideas and partial sentences or phrases for each detail. In the latter level of support, the teacher would omit key words from the outline and the student would be expected to identify these key words from the lecture or text. As an initial step to using guided notes, the teacher can read a passage with students and then fill-in the partially completed outline on an overhead, as students complete it at their desks. This will provide an appropriate model to students. As students become more familiar with notetaking and identifying relevant information, teachers can allow them to complete the guided notes on their own or in small groups. Additionally, the teacher can reduce the information and prompts provided on the guided note sheets, as students become more proficient at notetaking.

To assist student focus on relevant information during lectures, Deshler, Ellis, and Lenz (1996) have identified verbal cues that facilitate student notetaking. The researchers note three types of cues: (a) organizational cues; (b) verbal emphasis cues; and (c) subtle verbal emphasis cues. Organizational cues prompt students to listen for main ideas (e.g., Today we will discuss....; The topic is....) and be aware of changes from one main idea to the next (e.g., First of all....; Second....; Then....; Next....).

Verbal emphasis cues highlight key information and may be used as prompts for students to write down the information that follows. Some examples of this type of cue are: You should remember that....; You

need to know....; The important/key....; Listen carefully....; Let me emphasize....

Subtle verbal emphasis cues may also be used to focus student attention. For example, a teacher may ask a rhetorical question (e.g., I wonder what the reason is for the character's behavior?) or repeat words. In addition, the teacher can consciously speak slightly louder or emphasize certain words that are critical for students to include in their notes. When using verbal cues, especially subtle ones, students should be reminded of the meaning implied within each cue.

Students with LD and EBD may also have difficulties copying large amounts of information, even if they are focused on the relevant information. To reduce the frustration that can occur with copying notes from the chalkboard, teachers may need to provide support beyond guided notes. There are times when it is beneficial for teachers to simply provide notes to students in order to minimize the copying tasks.<sup>4</sup>

Good notetaking skills are important in most subject areas. Guided notes and verbal cues can provide detained or committed students the support they need to develop this critical skill.<sup>5</sup> Further, the consistent use of these effective instructional techniques by several teachers will allow students to generalize and apply notetaking to all subject areas.

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, S. M., Braxdale, C. T., & Colson S. E. (1988). Preparing dysfunctional learners to enter junior high school: A transitional curriculum. In E. L. Meyen, G. A. Vergason, & R. J. Whelan (Eds.), *Effective instructional strategies for exceptional children*. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Company.

<sup>2</sup> Deshler, D. D., Ellis, E. S., & Lenz, B. K. (1996). *Teaching adolescents with learning disabilities: Strategies and methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Denver, CO: Love Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Suritsky S. K., & Hughes, C. A. (1991). Benefits of notetaking: Implications for secondary and postsecondary students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 14, 7-18.

<sup>4</sup> Mohr, L. L. (1995). *Teaching diverse students in inclusive settings: Steps for adapting instruction*. Paper presented at annual international convention of Council for Exceptional Children, Indianapolis, IN.

<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, S. L., Seibert, M. A., Gardner, R., III, & Talbert-Johnson, C. (2000). Using guided notes to improve the academic achievement of incarcerated adolescents with learning and behavior problems. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21, 133-140.

### FOR FURTHER READING

Hamilton, S. L., Seibert, M. A., Gardner, R., III, & Talbert-Johnson, C. (2000). Using guided notes to improve the academic achievement of incarcerated adolescents with learning and behavior problems. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21, 133-140.

## Supporting Parents and Families

### **Parent Participation and IEP's**

Youth who have an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) prior to detention or commitment have a right to special education services when incarcerated. Youth identified as having a disability while incarcerated are also entitled to educational services. In both instances, parents have the right to participate in the development or modification of their son or daughter's IEP.

Attending IEP meetings can be difficult for parents whose child is in a correctional facility. Long distances to the facility and scheduling conflicts with work are just a couple of the problems parents face. The PACER Center ([www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)) has identified ways that parents can maintain involvement in the IEP process, even if they are not able to attend an IEP meeting:

- Participate by telephone

- Share information about your child with facility staff
- Ask questions about the classes or special education services your child needs
- Ask to have a surrogate parent appointed to represent your child
- Obtain copies of all educational records
- Agree or disagree, in writing, with the IEP

Active parental involvement in the IEP process provides parents with their legal right to involvement, promotes positive interactions between facility staff and parents, and maintains connections between the youth and his/her family.

#### Helping Attorneys Help Families

One important resource for attorneys who are defending youth is the guide from EDJJ Resource Fellow Joseph B. Tulman, *Special Education Advocacy Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Children in the Juvenile Delinquency System* (1998). The publication can be ordered through:

Professor Joseph B. Tulman,  
University of the District of  
Columbia School of Law,  
4200 Connecticut Ave., N.W.,  
Building 38, Room 207,  
Washington, DC 20008.

A new publication is also available from PACER. Jordan, D., & Goldberg, P. (2001). *A Guidebook for Parents of Children with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders*. Minneapolis MN: PACER. Order on-line ([www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)) or call (952) 838-9000.

## Upcoming Events

### EDJJ AT CEC

The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice (EDJJ) will present a strand, "Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice" at the 2002 Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Annual Convention and Expo in New York City April 3-6.

The EDJJ strand will take place throughout the day on April 5 and address four central issues: (a) meeting the educational needs of youth with disabilities in juvenile corrections through empirically-validated approaches; (b) technical assistance and support for education services in juvenile justice; (c) promoting professional development and collaboration for educators in juvenile justice; and (d) projects being conducted by the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice.

Participants will be able to:

- Discuss instructional approaches for working with youth with disabilities in juvenile corrections
- Describe current research on the educational needs of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system and its practical implications for teachers
- Identify the features of a professional development program for teachers in juvenile justice
- Explain best practices for program monitoring and evaluating in juvenile corrections

Feel free to attend a single session, multiple sessions, or join us for the entire strand. For more information and to register for the conference, visit CEC on-line at <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

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Vol.1, No. 3, January 2002

A free bi-monthly on-line newsletter of the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice (EDJJ). EDJJ is a technical assistance, training, research, and dissemination center that is jointly funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice. This publication is supported by Grant No. H324J990003, U.S. Department of Education.

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