

same school districts with significantly lower test scores (high-poverty, low-achieving--HPLA). Teams of two trained observers made one-day visits to all six schools.

The qualitative phase of the study involved assessing the school climate through administrative surveys, on-site observations, and interviews with school staff. During the site visits, observers met with the school administrators, collected the surveys and additional school materials, conducted interviews, and observed in common areas and in selected third-grade classrooms. The observers noted student and adult interactions, routines, the physical condition of the schools, and classroom instructional activities.

Results indicated that several factors, both external and internal, may account for differences between the HPHA schools and the HPLA schools. The following themes emerged:

- **School size.** The three HPHA schools had significantly smaller enrollments than the comparison schools in the same district (150 versus 249, 220 versus 371, 240 versus 470). The research on school size indicates that absenteeism is lower, classroom participation is better, and students report feeling more supported in small as opposed to large schools.¹
- **School condition.** All three of the low performing schools' physical buildings were in need of repair and all were undergoing construction or renovation. Overcrowding, poor building design, and portable buildings hamper communication and increase isolation. An unkempt appearance adds to the general perception that a school lacks order and safety.² Lower student achievement has been documented in schools with poor building conditions compared to those in fair or excellent condition.³
- **Instructional spending.** The three HPHA schools reportedly spent more money per pupil on instruction. While quantity does not necessarily translate into quality, the amount of money spent per pupil on instruction generally correlates with higher student achievement scores.⁴
- **Adult/student interactions.** The number of adult/student interactions observed was greater at the HPHA schools, and the types of these interactions were more positive than in the HPLA schools. The quality of adult/student relationships is an important factor in predicting students' school adjustment, social skills, and academic success.⁵
- **Student engagement.** The level of student engagement was higher in the HPHA schools. Research has shown a direct, positive correlation between the amount of student active participation and achievement.⁶
- **Student discipline.** The HPHA schools reported lower suspension rates compared with the HPLA schools (0% versus 4.0%, 2.7% versus 14%, 5.4% versus 20.6%). School suspension has been related to school failure, dropout, delinquency, and criminal behavior. Students who are frequently suspended may get behind academically and have difficulty catching up, perpetrating a cycle of academic failure and misbehavior.⁷
- **Attendance rate.** The HPHA schools reported higher attendance rates than the HPLA schools (93.8% versus 91.4%, 96.2% versus 93.7%, 94.6% versus 90.4%). School attendance and school connectedness are essential for successful student outcomes.⁸
- **Parent involvement.** Compared with the HPLA schools, HPHA schools reported higher rates of parents who had attended at least one conference with their child's

teacher (88.8% versus 51.9%, 79.5% versus 71.8%, 80.9% versus 43.8%). Research indicates that parent involvement is linked to successful student outcomes.⁹

The risks that children face by being born poor are enormous. The goal of this study was to identify factors that high-poverty schools can address to counteract the risks of poverty for their students. School culture and organizational structures affect student outcomes and these variables can be altered more easily than external, person-centered characteristics, such as poverty and family variables. The results suggest that strategies targeting school culture and organizational structures may improve outcomes for students attending high-poverty schools and reduce the risks associated with school failure.

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Girls, Crime, and Juvenile Justice

By Elizabeth Malouf

Many delinquent girls have little in common with delinquent boys. Early adolescence, a crucial period in development, is dramatically different for girls and boys. While boys usually become more confident, girls' sense of self worth may diminish. In addition to their psychological differences, girls commonly have different experiences associated with their delinquent behavior.

Girls at Risk

A number of factors place girls at risk or are associated with involvement in the juvenile justice system.

- *Trauma.* A history of physical and sexual abuse may put girls at-risk for delinquent behavior. Since girls may not have adequate resources to cope with abuse or trauma in their lives, many engage in unhealthy behaviors as coping mechanisms.
- *Substance Abuse.* Many girls abuse alcohol and other drugs to escape the pain resulting from trauma. Substance abuse is associated with other delinquent behavior such as truancy, gang membership, and risky sexual behavior.
- *Running away.* While drugs provide a psychological escape, girls may try to physically escape abuse by running away. This behavior places them at a much higher risk for crime, as they sometimes engage in prostitution or sell drugs to support themselves.
- *Mental health.* Many girls involved in the juvenile justice system face mental health issues. Depression and eating disorders are common problems experienced by these girls.
- *Education:* Like their male counterparts, girls may exhibit low levels of academic achievement and school failure. Often they have a history of special education classification, suspension, and expulsion. However, girls involved in the juvenile justice system are generally more academically competent and have experienced less exclusion from school than their male counterparts.
- *Social Issues:* Arrest rates and confinement statistics provide evidence of racial and socioeconomic bias among girls. These issues can also put certain girls at risk for involvement with juvenile corrections.

Girls within Juvenile Justice

The treatment of youth within the juvenile justice system reflects gender bias.¹ For example girls are disproportionately arrested for status offenses -- crimes only a

minor can commit such as running away, truancy, incorrigibility, and curfew violation. This may reflect parental or societal bias about acceptable female behavior.

There is conflicting evidence on the outcome of the juvenile justice systems' differential treatment of boys and girls. Evidence suggests that females are more likely to be processed informally and less likely to receive residential placement than males.² Others have asserted that when the juvenile justice system detains girls, it does so for longer periods of time.³ The juvenile justice system may be more lenient with some female offenders and more restrictive with others based on race, family factors, and type of offense.

Two prominent patterns in arrest trends for girls have emerged in the past few years. First, the number of girls arrested is growing at a faster rate than that of boys.⁴ This trend holds true for girls of all races. Second, girls are being arrested for more violent crimes with boys constituting a diminishing majority of violent crime arrests.⁵ A number of researchers suggest that the increase in girls' violent crime arrests is partly due to a decrease in tolerance for girls' acting out.⁶

Programming

Appropriate programming for girls in the juvenile justice system should reflect their unique needs and contribute to their successful habilitation. Programs are needed for prevention, intervention once in the juvenile justice system, and aftercare upon return to the community. Principles and components for girls' programming should include:

- *Gender-appropriate activities.* These should focus on developing a positive sense of self, as well as addressing specific needs. Gender-specific services should value the female perspective, address female development, and work

to change girls' attitudes that discourage them from recognizing their potential.

- *Interagency collaboration.* Multiple systems should work together to provide girls with a range of programs that are gender specific and culturally appropriate within their communities.
- *Positive and culturally relevant role models and mentors.* Girls need examples of responsible and positive female development. Mentors can provide individualized attention and make important connections for employment, education or family support. A mentoring relationship can increase a girl's coping and decision-making skills and broaden her aspirations.
- *Flexible services to address individual needs.* Some girls require intensive remedial academic support, while others could benefit from guidance and encouragement to pursue post-secondary education. A significant number of girls need counseling and treatment for substance abuse, mental disorders, and associated trauma. Many females also need accommodations for their children in order to regularly attend programs.
- *Skilled and knowledgeable staff.* Staff must have training to develop effective practices in working with females. For example, training in female adolescent development can help staff understand that girls are more likely to question rules and seek verbal engagement than boys. Understanding girls' cultures and languages is an important way to build relationships and trust.
- *A continuum of programs.* There is a need for prevention programming before girls comes into contact with the juvenile justice system, appropriate education and mental health services in corrections, and community-based programs and supports for girls as they

leave secure facilities. Programs should provide gender-specific services that address issues of trauma, sexuality, parenting, and abuse that are common among this population.⁶

Summary

There is a growing awareness of the needs of adolescent girls at-risk for or involved with the juvenile justice system. Although girls still represent a relatively small number of offenders, their numbers are growing and the types of crimes with which they are charged are increasingly more serious. There is an acute need for research and development of effective programming at all stages of the intervention continuum: prevention, intervention and aftercare.

¹Chesney-Lind, M. & Sheldon, R. G. (1992). *Girls, delinquency and juvenile justice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

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Parents and Professionals

Parents are from Mars, Professionals are from Pluto!

By Lili Garfinkel

Parent and professional collaboration has often been an elusive goal for families

whose children have disabilities. Over time, greater parent and professional education has resulted in more effective collaboration in school and with health and social service providers. Juvenile, criminal court, and corrections settings, however, remain mainly intimidating and inaccessible to parents. While professionals complain about the lack of parental involvement in the court process, the justice system provides few opportunities for parents to participate.

Advocates for youth with disabilities work with parents and extended family members from a variety of ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and other backgrounds to break down the barriers to effective collaboration. In the juvenile justice system, much of this work involves facilitating interaction between persons involved in the child's life and mental health professionals, educators, public defenders, probation officers, and other personnel. Advocates assist parents in understanding judicial procedures, ensure that information about a youth's disabilities reaches the court, and promote appropriate special education services for adjudicated youth.

Many professionals work hard to develop positive and collaborative relationships with families and other providers. However, they may be overwhelmed by large caseloads, limited resources, and the complex needs of youth and families.

Effective collaboration can be difficult. For example, parents and professionals are often frustrated when they communicate with each other and within the justice system. An advocate may hear dialogue something like this:

Professional: If she doesn't get her kid to school, he's truant and then we won't have a choice-he'll be locked up.

Parent: They threaten to take my kid away. I've tried everything-I don't know what to do next. My son is depressed and won't go to school.

Professional: This parent is hostile and undermines my work with her kid.

Parent: I want to cooperate but the probation officer hates my son and me. He thinks ADHD is just an excuse.

Professional: Why can't they watch her better? It looks like no one is in charge.

Parent: I work three jobs so I won't be on welfare. I can't be home much. I've asked for help for my kids, and I can't get any from social services.

Professional: If anyone cared about this kid, they'd make an effort to be in court.

Parent: If I take any more time off from work I'll be fired. The last time I was in court, I sat for 3 hours and the case was dismissed!

Parents whose child appears in court for the first time are confused, unaware of what to do, and hopeful that the truth will emerge and their child will receive help. Other parents, more familiar with the process, may be suspicious and fearful. In juvenile court and in corrections settings, feelings are often intensified by a number of factors including:

- The Court's mandate to protect the public and punish the offender;
- The diminishing goal of rehabilitation;
- The limited opportunity for the parent to advocate on behalf of the child;
- The gulf between the powerlessness of the parent and the power of the law;

- The increasing tendency to refer school-based behaviors to court instead of addressing them through the IEP process;
- The transfer of juveniles to adult court, where the possibility for rehabilitation and disability sensitive interventions are scarce; and
- The disproportionate representation of children of color in all stages of the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Youth and family advocates have the difficult task of assisting parents, while providing critical information to police, court officials, and correctional professionals on the unique needs of youth with disabilities. Above all, advocating for youth with disabilities in court requires education for parents about how the system works and how they can be most effective.

To assist professionals, advocates must provide formal and informal training and information concerning youth mental health issues, special education protections, and strategies for how they can reach out to families and surrogates more successfully. Professionals must also be encouraged to find and build on youth and family strengths. Clearly, advocates for youth and families play an important role in bridging the communication gap between families and professionals.

Research to Practice

Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration can be an effective approach to improving instruction and decreasing teacher isolation within juvenile correctional education. Co-teaching is defined as, “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (p. 2).¹

Researchers² identify several benefits of co-teaching, including an increase in instructional options for students, improvement in program intensity and continuity, and reduction in stigma for students with learning and behavioral problems.

However, successful co-teaching requires collaborating teachers to clarify personal beliefs in nine key areas: (a) philosophies and beliefs; (b) parity signals; (c) noise; (d) classroom routines; (e) discipline; (f) feedback; and (g) pet peeves; (h) planning; and (i) confidentiality. Addressed below are questions teachers should discuss in each area:

Philosophies and beliefs:

- What are our overriding philosophies about the roles of teachers and teaching and about students and learning?
- How do our instructional beliefs affect our instructional practice?

Parity signals:

- How will we convey to students and others (e.g., teachers, parents) that we are equals in the classroom?
- How can we assure a sense of parity during instruction?

Noise:

- What noise level are we comfortable with in the classroom?

Classroom routines:

- What are the instructional routines for the classroom?
- What are the organizational routines for the classroom?

Discipline:

- What is acceptable and unacceptable student behavior?
- Who is to intervene at what point in students' behavior?
- What are the rewards and consequences used in the classroom?

Feedback:

- What is the best way to give each other feedback?

- How will we ensure that both positive and negative issues are raised?

Pet peeves:

- What aspects of teaching and classroom life does each of us feel strongly about?
- How can we identify our pet peeves so as to avoid them? (p. 64)³

Planning:

- When do we have at least 30 minutes of shared planning time?
- How do we divide our responsibility for planning and teaching?
- How much joint planning time do we need?
- What records can we keep to facilitate our planning?

Confidentiality:

- What information about our teaching do we want to share with others?
- Which information should not be shared?
- Which information about students can be shared with others? (p. 10)⁴

Through open communication and discussion of critical issues, there is greater likelihood that students will benefit from successful teacher collaboration.

^{1,2}Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 28, (3), 1-16.

³Friend, M. & Cook, L. (2000). Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals. New York, NY: Longman

⁴Id. 1

Upcoming Conferences

November 20-22, 2002

Educating At-Risk Youth

Galt House, Louisville, KY

Contact: Lisa Fields, 859-622-6259

Web site: www.trc.eku.edu

November 21-23, 2002

Teacher Educators for Children with Behavior Disorders – TECBD

Tempe Mission Palms Resort, Tempe, AZ

Contact: Robert Rutherford, 480-965-1450

web site: www.tecbd.org/main.htm

January 16-18, 2003

Developing and Using Education as an Intervention and Rehabilitation Strategy for At-Risk Youth

Hyatt Regency Suites, Palm Springs, CA

Contact: Jessica Larson, 909-880-5977

e-mail: jdlarson@csusb.edu

March 6, 2003

Teleconference – Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice

1:00-3:00 p.m. EST

Contact: EDJJ office, 301-405-6462

Web site: www.edjj.org

March 31-April 5, 2003

14th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect: Gateways to Prevention

St. Louis, MO

Contact: 703-528-0435

e-mail: 14Conf@pal-tech.com

Web site:

www.calib.com/nccanch/cbconference/14natl.cfm

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Editor: Joe Gagnon
George Mason University
Project Director: Peter Leone
University of Maryland
Department of Special Education
1308 Benjamin Building
College Park, MD 20742

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