

# Education Services and Supports for Students in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

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## Executive Summary

The education program in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) facilities is inadequate. The program operates far below minimally accepted standards at comparable facilities across the country, does not appear to meet minimal standards for education as specified in the Illinois School Code, does not meet the needs of students with disabilities, and appears to violate both State regulations and Federal legislation. At most facilities, students receive less than a full-time education program because of teacher vacancies and lack of support staff. With few exceptions, all students' education services are provided via an on-line, digital education program; while this meets the needs of some students, particularly those who are highly motivated, it is insufficient as a primary mode of instruction for all students.

During the past six months, I visited five of the six facilities operated by IDJJ. During these visits I interviewed students and staff, observed classrooms, and reviewed documents. I also met with facility leadership and support staff and conferred with the other experts appointed by the Court. There are systemic problems at IDJJ facilities that interfere with the ability of youth to receive services to which they are entitled, to prepare for careers and post-secondary education, and successfully return to their community. More specifically, I found:

- Inadequate instruction and inadequate opportunities for students to learn,
- Inadequate special education services,
- Minimal career and technical education,
- Absence of post-secondary education and preparation for post-secondary education,
- Inadequate transition services and supports,
- Frequent use of punitive and ineffective responses to student behavior,
- Inefficient management of human and fiscal resources,
- Inconsistent collaboration between education and custody staff,
- Demoralized teaching and support staff, and
- Inadequate infrastructure and support for education services.

During my visits I also found students who were enrolled in school and who had not received their high school diploma or GED, mowing lawns and performing other institutional work during the school day. Recreation services were not available for all youth on a regular basis. Students reported that entire units lost recreation time when one student on the unit acted out.

The prior school history and achievement levels of many students in the IDJJ present challenges to the development and sustainability of a quality education program that meets the needs of all youth committed to the IDJJ. However, a number of juvenile facilities across the country have designed and delivered high quality education services to incarcerated adolescents with history of school failure, educational disabilities, and mental health problems that meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

Fixing the education program at IDJJ facilities and ensuring that youth receive services to which they are entitled will not be easy. Ensuring that the education program helps youth develop academic, vocational, and technical skills that increase the likelihood that they will successfully reenter the community and not reoffend is imperative. Following the presentation of findings specific to each facility, I discuss student interviews, the adequacy of infrastructure supporting education, and make summary statements about the education program. The report outlines six broad areas of reform: Leadership, Autonomy, & Accountability; Fiscal Structure; Professional Culture and Support; Services, Instruction, and Programs; External Support and Partnerships; and Quality Assurance and Sustainability. I conclude with a discussion and an approach to transform the education and recreation services at the IDJJ facilities.

## Introduction

This report was authorized by the *R.J. et al. v. Bishop Consent Decree* approved by the U.S. District Court on December 6, 2012. The Court-appointed experts in this case were asked to “investigate IDJJ mental health services, general and special education services, room confinement, safety, and commitment beyond release dates for lack of a community placement.”<sup>1</sup> This report addresses the adequacy of education services and supports in the IDJJ facilities and recommends a course of action to address shortcomings. Some of the concerns and problems identified can be addressed through personnel development, hiring, and changes in supervision and collaboration between custody staff, treatment staff, and educators. Other problems identified will require changes in infrastructure to support education and changes in institutional culture.

This report was developed following multi-day site visits to IYCs at Chicago, Harrisburg, Kewanee, St. Charles, and Warrenville.<sup>2</sup> During my visits to the facilities I observed activities in 37 classrooms, interviewed 51 students, as well as teachers and administrators individually and in small groups. I also reviewed segregation unit logs, records of school cancellations, and students’ Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Incarcerated youth are among the least academically proficient individuals in society. While incarcerated, youth must have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that will assist them in remaining crime free and out of the juvenile and criminal courts following their release. Further, the skills they develop while in custody can increase the likelihood that they will continue their education or training and enter the workforce as productive citizens.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 6, *R.J. et al. v. Bishop Consent Decree*, Case No. 1:12-cv-7289.

<sup>2</sup> IYC Chicago (3/5, 3/6), IYC Harrisburg (6/3, 6/4), IYC Kewanee (7/9-7/12), IYC St. Charles (5/7-5/9), and IYC Warrenville (3/6, 3/7). I did not visit IYC Pere Marquette; it was flooded and youth had been evacuated at the time I planned to visit the facility.

<sup>3</sup> See Lockner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004). The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self-reports. *American Economic Review*, 94 (1), 155-189; Lee, S., Aos, S., Drake, E., Pennucci, A., Miller, M., & Anderson, L. (2012). Return on investment: Evidence-based options to improve statewide outcomes, April 2012

In all states, eligible incarcerated youth are also entitled to special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and corresponding state laws and regulations. Youth are also entitled to the protections and supports associated with Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In many states including Illinois, juvenile justice agencies have the authority to provide education services and related supports and function in some respects like school districts. In other states local school districts operate education programs (OK, OR, UT, WA) and in other jurisdictions charter schools or private contractors operate education program in juvenile detention and commitment facilities (FL, DC). Other states have a combination of public and private agencies provide education services (MA, MD). While there is no one best model for providing services, professional autonomy, accountability, fiscal support, and transparency are key elements of quality programs.

## **IDJJ Site Visits**

### **IYC Chicago**

On the days I visited IYC Chicago, there were approximately 92 students in the facility. Of that number, 68 were enrolled in school and 42 students or 62% of those in school were identified as needing special education services. The school staff consisted of a principal, a diagnostician, a librarian, a secretary, and six teachers. Academic instruction at IYC-Chicago is primarily based on the Pearson Florida Virtual School program with few exceptions. During my visit I found students in most classes completing coursework on-line. I found group instruction in the life skills class and in social studies where students were taking notes and preparing for a quiz on the American Revolution. In the special education class, I found students working in pairs studying for a spelling test. In contrast to some of the other facilities, most students who were enrolled in school attended for a full day.

One group of students at IYC Chicago who did not attend school was parole violators. Observations and an interview with one youth indicated that parole violators who may have been returned to custody for failure to keep curfew or attend school, received no education services when returned to IYC Chicago. Students placed in “Unit D”, the parole violators unit, appeared to spend their time completing crossword puzzles, watching TV, and playing cards. While the intent of the parole violators’ program was to place students “half-way back” into the system, I found no rational justification for failure to provide education services to these youth, many of whom were enrolled in high school or alternative school in the Chicago Public Schools.

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(Document No. 12-04-1201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy,  
<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/12-04-1201.pdf>

## IYC Harrisburg

At the time of my visit there were 210 youth at Harrisburg. Of this number, 188 were enrolled in school. Twenty teachers including six from Southeastern Illinois College (SIC)<sup>4</sup> provided instruction at Harrisburg. Because of staff shortages, not all living units attended school fulltime. According to staff, during any given week several units are held back from school because of an insufficient number of teachers. Students in the confinement unit as well as those in reception receive no education services. Students who have received their high school diploma as well as those with a GED certificate do not attend school.

With the exception of the career and technical education classes, all instruction at Harrisburg is web-based. Several teachers interviewed during my visit estimated that about half of the students benefited from the on-line instruction and their ability to accelerate their high school credit accumulation. While some students during interviews reported that they liked being able to work at their own pace, others complained bitterly about the lack of direct instruction and their teachers' inability to assist them. Typical responses from students who did not feel that they were benefiting from the web-based instruction were, "teachers don't know the content we're studying" and "we don't learn nothin', we're just on computers all day." Because students can work on any course modules in any class and at their own pace, their claim that teachers don't know the content they (the students) are working on has validity.

In addition to intake, segregation, and general population units, Harrisburg has a behavioral unit referred to as the Phoenix Program. Based on Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), this program is designed to decrease recidivism among juveniles by increasing moral reasoning. The Phoenix Program at Harrisburg has the capacity for 15 youth and is designed to last 9-12 weeks. Students move through several stages while in Phoenix and earn increasing privileges. Students in the Phoenix Program do not attend school with youth in the school building. Rather, a maximum of five students in Phoenix can attend a class in a small room on their living unit that is devoid of any instructional materials or displays. Until recently, according to the teacher, students were shackled to the floor next to their desks during class. I was assured that this was no longer occurring. During my visit I observed three students in the classroom in the Phoenix living unit completing MRT worksheets under the direction of the teacher. Students in the Phoenix program did not receive the regular curriculum during the time they were on the unit and they did not attend school every day.

Boys I interviewed who had received their high school diploma or GED certificate had very limited options. Because there is no librarian at Harrisburg, students who are not in school had very limited access to books. Most of these students had jobs in the facility but were not enrolled in coursework or programs that led to certification or completion of college credits.

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<sup>4</sup> According to staff I interviewed, on June 30, 2013, SIC terminated a long-standing contract with the IDJJ. Six teachers who provided career and technical education classes and one program coordinator from SIC were terminated.

Several students commented on vocational and career interests but indicated that there was no instruction and no access to books or counseling relative to their post-institutional interests.

While the focus of my interviews with youth was the education program, youth offered unsolicited comments on the language used by custody staff. Several boys, independently of one another, said that staff regularly swore at them and used homophobic slurs. Several youth reported that staff regularly took away shower and recreation time for an entire unit because one or two youth used foul language or because they were talking in line.<sup>5</sup>

## IYC Kewanee

There were approximately 220 youth at IYC Kewanee at the time of my visit. Of this number, 140 were enrolled in school. Those not attending school included high school graduates and GED certificate recipients as well a few youth over age 18 who did not want to attend school. The education staff included nine teachers, a librarian, an office coordinator, and a school principal. There were eight teacher vacancies at the time of my visit. Students at Kewanee attended school from six to twelve hours each week depending upon their living unit; this has been the practice since February 2013 according to staff. None of the students enrolled in special education were receiving the services as specified on their IEPs or Individualized Education Programs and only 25 of the approximately 90 students' IEPs were up to date.

Like other IDJJ facilities, nearly all instruction was individualized and web-based. I observed no group instruction and no warm up or concluding activities during my classroom visits. Students reported to me during interviews that some students complete work for others in the virtual classroom; they reported that it was not difficult to get help from other students. During my observations I found some students engaged and working diligently at their computers and others waiting for videos that were embedded in the instruction to load.<sup>6</sup> I also observed students chatting with other students and not engaged in educational activities.

During my visit to Kewanee I met with a group of teachers and discussed the status of the education program with them. They were concerned about the long-term status of the facility, about the challenges associated with the virtual classroom instruction, and the feasibility of having post-secondary education available for students at Kewanee. The teachers appeared to be committed to their work but they were frustrated by the lack of support for instruction and their inability to provide full-time school for their students.

There was only one vocational class available at Kewanee and the teacher was out on medical leave at the time of my visit. Like other facilities in the IDJJ, there are no substitute teachers at Kewanee and when teachers are absent, most often classes are cancelled and students return to

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<sup>5</sup> Students reported that this occurs regularly on Unit 6 and on Unit 9, second shift at Harrisburg.

<sup>6</sup> At Kewanee, adequate bandwidth for the web-based education program was a serious problem.

their living units. Kewanee has four vocational classrooms but two of the four classrooms have been converted to offices for custody staff.

## IYC St. Charles

At the time of my visit there were approximately 160 youth at IYC St. Charles. All students enrolled in school attended either mornings or afternoons. Students in the intake unit as well as those in Taylor, the segregation unit receive no schooling. Because of staff shortages, training activities, and other events, school also has been cancelled at St. Charles on a regular basis. For example, in March 2013 school was cancelled for five full days and three half days. In April 2013 school was cancelled four full days and three half days. Because students only attend class in the morning or afternoon, under a best case scenario, students received the equivalent of six to eight full days of school during each of these two months.<sup>7,8</sup>

The teaching staff at St. Charles consists of six general education teachers, five special education teachers, and a vocational education instructor. Two of the teachers are on long-term medical leave and like other IDJJ facilities there are no substitute teachers to cover their classes. Currently there are eight teacher vacancies at St. Charles. In contrast to the other facilities, the instruction at St. Charles was a mix of web-based and traditional instruction. During my classroom observations I found most students in the digital classrooms actively engaged in instruction. In a traditionally taught English class, I found a group of eight students reading and discussing a text about Malcolm X. The students in the class were asking and responding to questions and listening respectfully to the teacher and each other.

During the half day that students are not in class, many are brought to the library, a spacious room with books lining the walls, 12-15 tables in the center of the rooms, and no librarian. I spent several hours one day in the library interviewing students and observing. A few students were reading independently, many were playing cards or talking, and periodically, a few were running around the room. These youth would return to a seat after a custody staff member directed them to do so.

St. Charles has one vocational program in building trades. However, at the time of my visit students were engaged in production work for the facility. A team of six students lead by their teacher and supervised by custody staff was building shelves for the institution. While there is some benefit associated with learning to work as a team and follow directions, this was not a class with a curriculum in which students learned a set of skills and progressively become more

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<sup>7</sup> Students in public school systems attend class on average, 20 or 21 days each month.

<sup>8</sup> Security staff shortages continue to have an adverse impact on the education program at St. Charles. On September 4, 2013, school was cancelled at the facility because there was not a sufficient number of security staff available.

competent at measuring, cutting, and finishing a set of projects.<sup>9</sup> Near the building trades program was vacant greenhouse that was used at one time for instruction but that currently was vacant.

## **IYC Warrenville**

On the days I visited IYC Warrenville there were approximately 42 students, six teachers, and one vocational instructor at the facility in addition to the principal. Seven of the 42 students or about 17% had received a high school diploma or GED. Some of these students worked in the kitchen others came to school and participated in a computer technology program though only one youth was enrolled in a post-secondary school program. Several students were enrolled in an on-line Spanish class and had a tutor 4-6 hours each week. The principal indicated that the students at this facility, the only girls' institution in the IDJJ, participated in field trips off grounds each quarter.

Similar to the other IDJJ facilities, instruction at IYC Warrenville was primarily web-based, on-line instruction. Staff reported that while the average length of stay at this girls' facility was six months, some girls are confined there for more than a year. Classroom observations showed students working independently at computer terminals often on coursework outside of the area of expertise of the teacher in the classroom. In one class, I was asked if I knew anything about social studies. One student was having difficulty and the teacher assigned to the class, a certified math teacher, was not able to respond to the student's question.

## **Student Interviews<sup>10</sup>**

During my site visits I interviewed 51 youth including some in the intake and segregation units, those who were high school diploma or a GED recipients, and students on general and specialized housing units. Students' comments indicate that while a few feel very positive about on-line instruction, the virtual school, and their ability to accelerate the rate at which they earn high school credits, the majority of youth are bored or feel overwhelmed by current instructional arrangements.

When asked about interests and aspirations, a few students spoke about specific careers and post-secondary programs. Many expressed an interest in playing sports professionally or working in a profession that required a college diploma or post-graduate degree. While some of these youth appeared to have the ability to enter these occupations, they were uninformed about how to pursue these aspirations. Some youth, when I asked about what they anticipate doing five years

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<sup>9</sup> Most likely the teacher in this class would differ with my assessment of the value of the work the students were doing on the day of my visit and whether or not it is appropriate to have students engaged in production work in lieu of learning new skills. Given the dearth of other career and vocational activities and the half-day school schedule, the students appeared to be enjoying the building trades program.

<sup>10</sup> Profiles of a representative set of student are presented in the Appendix.



from now, responded by saying things like “I have no idea,” “I have to think about that,” and “I’ll be working a good job.” In response to this last comment, I would ask “what type of job?” and would often hear in reply, comments like “maybe construction” or “maybe work in a restaurant.” Many youth commented on the lack of career and technical education courses. High school graduates and GED certificate recipients in particular, indicated that they would like to have coursework that led to certification and entry-level employment.<sup>11</sup>

## Personnel and Infrastructure

A serious problem with the education program is the lack of infrastructure to support the education program. Inadequate infrastructure contributes directly to the lack of compliance by the IDJJ with State regulations and Federal legislation. At the facility level, the absence of school counselors, librarians, substitute teachers, and administrative assistants has a profound impact on the quality of services.<sup>12</sup> For example without school counselors, obtaining prior school records, updating transcripts, and ensuring students are enrolled in appropriate courses does not happen in a timely basis if at all before students are transferred from the facility.<sup>13</sup> In the absence of librarians, students have difficulty obtaining books that are not provided to them by their teachers.<sup>14</sup> Students who have received their high school diploma or received their GED certificate reported that they were not able to obtain books unless they borrowed them from other students. In the absence of librarians, it appears that custody staff makes decisions about what constitutes appropriate reading material for youth. For example while some youth reported that their favorite author was James Patterson, other youth at the same facility indicated that they were not allowed to read Patterson’s books.<sup>15</sup>

In the absence of administrative assistants, school principals and teachers make requests for school records including IEPs. Staff at several facilities stated that they do not receive school records in a timely manner and do not receive prior school records for about half of their students. Another consequence of not having support staff is that when students who have left the facility request copies of transcripts or evidence a high school diploma, they often wait months to receive them. This delay has a major impact on the ability of youth to enroll in community college, other post-secondary programs, or obtain jobs. Lack of support personnel at the school level makes it virtually impossible for the principal to function as an instructional

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<sup>11</sup> At the time of my visits, one student at IYC Warrenville was enrolled in an independent study course at the College of DuPage that was being paid for by a Board member from Story Catchers. A number of students at Harrisburg were enrolled in courses at the facility taught by Southeastern Illinois College until June 30, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Harrisburg and Kewanee had administrative assistants in the school at the time of my visit; the administrative assistant at Kewanee was recently promoted and this position in the school is currently vacant.

<sup>13</sup> A student at Harrisburg commented that he was enrolled in a course that he had already completed. Teachers at Kewanee spent a good deal of instructional time updating students’ transcripts and performing some of the tasks performed by school counselors.

<sup>14</sup> IYC Kewanee has a librarian though students reported difficulty obtaining books. IYC Chicago has a librarian.

<sup>15</sup> In other juvenile facilities, the librarian in collaboration with custody staff, reviews books and determines which ones are acceptable in the facility.

leader. Because principals have by default assumed many administrative and support functions, they are infrequently in classrooms supporting teachers.

At the school district level, there is a dearth of professionals to handle the range of activities associated with the operation of a school district. The superintendent of schools,<sup>16</sup> a special education coordinator, several psychologists, and a career and technical education coordinator appear to manage the core functions for the school district. Given the size, geographical dispersion of the facilities, and the need to manage student transfers, records, and coordinate special education services, the number of central office education staff is insufficient.<sup>17</sup>

Another significant challenge is the current system for hiring teachers and other education staff. Currently, all teachers as State employees are hired through a centralized system that is cumbersome and inefficient. Principals stated that it takes from 6 to 8 months to replace teachers. Further, notices of teaching vacancies at IDJJ facilities are not advertised through the State Board of Education. Many of the best and most highly qualified teachers who have applied for IDJJ have found jobs by the time that the IDJJ staff is able to interview prospective candidates.

### **Summary Statements about the Adequacy of Education Services**

The education programs at the facilities operated by IDJJ are grossly inadequate. Most students do not receive services to which they are entitled under federal and state laws and regulations. At no IDJJ facility I visited, did all students receive a full day of instruction in part because of unfilled teacher vacancies. At each facility, students on isolation units, those on special housing units, and parole violators received no education or considerably less education than other youth in the institution. At some facilities, even when students received a half day of instruction, school was cancelled frequently because of an insufficient number of security staff.

For students eligible for special education services, inadequate resources have created a one-size-fits-all model for many students. While some students receive some of the services as specified on their IEPs (individualized education programs), many others who needed more intensive supports do not receive them. In some instances special education students did not receive any services because of laborious, centralized hiring practices and lengthy delays in filling teaching vacancies.<sup>18</sup> The dominant mode of instruction for all youth at all facilities is the Pearson Florida Virtual School program. While this meets the needs of some students, problems with its implementation and the lack of group interaction with other students and teachers does not facilitate a host of essential social skills and collaborative learning opportunities. During

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<sup>16</sup> The IDJJ Superintendent of Schools resigned in August 2013 as this report was being written. A teacher from IDJJ Harrisburg has been assigned as the Acting Superintendent.

<sup>17</sup> Insufficient staff makes it difficult to coordinate special activities, pursue grants and other supplemental funding opportunities, and provide adequate supervision.

<sup>18</sup> For example, the IDJJ has just begun to contact candidates for positions that were posted last April on the State website. Needless to say, well-qualified candidates have taken positions during the past four months and have begun employment with other school districts.

interviews, students shared with me the ease with which it is possible to complete modules and earn credits with minimal effort. These comments confirmed some of what I saw during my classroom observations.<sup>19</sup>

None of the facilities I visited had guidance counselors and few had librarians. While each facility had library space, regular student access to the libraries and support for literacy activities was a serious problem. The facilities had very few volunteers working with students.<sup>20</sup> In general, the quality of instruction and the infrastructure to support the academic and vocational programs at the IDJJ facilities was inadequate. Under current arrangements, many students do not receive services to which they are entitled and many do not experience normative adolescent high school activities associated with positive leisure time and recreation activities and successful transition to their home communities. My observations and interviews with youth indicated that many students are not challenged intellectually by the academic program.

The career and technical education program (CTE, or vocational education) is wholly inadequate. Several sites have one or two classes but student access is limited to only a handful of students and in one instance, the CTE class was doing production work for the facility. Students who have received their high school diploma or GED certificate have literally nothing to do. They spend long hours mostly in their living units playing cards and watching TV. While some have jobs and participate on work crews, these assignments are not structured in a way that enables youth to earn certification and prepare for transition to the community and competitive employment. High school graduates and GED certificate recipients with a few exceptions do not have access to community college courses, career guidance, and adequate transitional support.

## Strategies for Reform

Transforming the education program for adolescents and young adults in the IDJJ facilities will require bold action. Incremental steps such as filling vacant teaching positions more rapidly, doubling down on staff development activities, or upgrading technology for classrooms are laudable actions; however, in the absence of a strategic plan that includes both short-term and long-term steps and regulatory or statutory reform many of the structural problems in the current system will not be fixed. The recommendations presented below are organized into five broad areas that provide a framework for the education reform. Other states and local jurisdictions including the District of Columbia, Delaware, Hawaii, and Los Angeles County to name a few,

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<sup>19</sup> I have observed well-implemented web-based instruction in juvenile corrections. Used as a part of a blended approach to learning, this approach can meet the needs of some learners and enabled them to accelerate the accumulation of high school credits. In the IDJJ facilities, the web-based program is unevenly implemented, not properly monitored, and used as the only means of instruction for most students.

<sup>20</sup> Several facilities had volunteers who supported the education program at worked 1:1 with individual youth. Staff reported difficulty and lengthy delay in getting volunteers screened and approved. The numbers of volunteers bear this out; Warrenton had one or two tutors and Kewanee had one tutor supporting the school program. In Delaware and New York for example, community partners provide scores of volunteers – often retired citizens – who visit facilities on a weekly basis and provide support to students and the school program.

have made significant changes to the operation of their school programs in recent years. Administrators, policy makers, and politicians have discovered that reforming education in juvenile corrections to resemble services and supports that would be acceptable for their own children does not compromise institutional security and can lead to better post-institutional outcomes.

Six broad areas and recommendations for reform include:

## **1. Leadership, Autonomy, and Accountability**

- a. Publically commit to the transformation of education in the facilities. Convene a stakeholders' advisory group to support the efforts of the Director of IDJJ and staff in making critical changes.
- b. Establish a mission and vision for the education program.
- c. Develop a timeline for transformation of the education program
- d. Review the operations of IDJJ School District #428; ensure that it can function in most respects like a local education agency.
  - a. Obtain authority to control the hiring and job posting for IDJJ teaching and other professional position. Current arrangements directly contribute to IDJJ's high rate of teacher vacancies and failure to provide services consistent with state regulations and federal legislation.
- e. Pursue enabling legislation or regulations that enable IDJJ to operate an education program comparable in quality to those available to other adolescents and young adults in the State.
  - a. Consider transforming the current school calendar and contract terms for teachers to an annual 9 + 2 month arrangement.<sup>21, 22</sup>
- f. The Illinois State Board of Education should exercise its responsibility to evaluate the special education services in IDJJ facilities.<sup>23</sup> The current program appears to be in violation of both State regulations and Federal legislation.

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<sup>21</sup> The current school schedule enables teachers to take vacation days nearly any time during tradition school semesters. Under a 9 + 2 arrangement, all teachers would have the same vacation days, similar to the operation of the public schools. This arrangement could give teachers the option of working 9 or 9 ½ months rather than 12 and would provide IDJJ with a stream of well-qualified summer school teachers who might be interested in full-time employment with IDJJ in the future.

<sup>22</sup> In 2012, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the education agency that provides education services to youth in 15 long-term juvenile facilities in the County, renegotiated its contract with teachers to a 10 + 1 contract in order to provide more stability to the education program and eliminate a high rate of absenteeism during the school semesters due to teacher vacations.

<sup>23</sup> See IL Administrative Code, TITLE 23: EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, SUBTITLE A: EDUCATION, CHAPTER I: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, SUBCHAPTER F: INSTRUCTION FOR SPECIFIC STUDENT POPULATIONS PART 226 SPECIAL EDUCATION, SECTION 226.760, Evaluation of Special Education.

- g. Ensure that funding mechanisms and plans for transformation of the education program provide access to all coursework, examinations, and experiences required for high school graduation.
- h. In the event that the IDJJ is unable to obtain authority and autonomy for the education program that enable it to comply with IL State Board of Education regulations and federal legislation, the IDJJ should establish the legal and political framework to establish,
  - i. Charter school status,
  - ii. Purchase of services agreements, and/or
  - iii. Contracts for service delivery by an outside organization or group to operate the education program in IDJJ facilities.<sup>24</sup>
- i. Pursue accreditation for school programs through North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement.<sup>25</sup> If contractors or charter schools operate education in facilities, require that they pursue accreditation.

## **2. Fiscal Structure**

- a. Develop per-pupil funding mechanisms to ensure adequate fiscal support for the education programs.
  - i. The high percentage of youth eligible for special education services and the mobility associated with institutional placements require a weighted funding above the average per-pupil costs for the State.
  - ii. Explore school district of origin as a source of funding as well as other options.

## **3. Professional Culture and Support**

- a. Link the mission and vision developed for the education program to the development of professional learning communities at each facility.
- b. Use professional learning communities to support instructional excellence.
- c. Align activities recommended by the Courts' experts for general conditions and mental health with education to create a positive youth development culture with each facility.

## **4. Services, Instruction, and Programs**

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<sup>24</sup> At the Wayne County, Michigan Juvenile Detention Facility, a charter school operates the education program. At New Beginnings, the long-term juvenile corrections facility for the District of Columbia, the See Forever Foundation operates the Maya Angelou Academy under contract with the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.ncacasi.org/>. During the past 25 years, an increasing number of education programs in juvenile corrections have become accredited by professional associations. Juvenile correctional facilities in Alabama, California, Delaware, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia are accredited and meet many of the same standards associated with the operation of the public schools.

- a. Develop an instructional model that provides both traditional classroom instruction as well as web-based credit recovery options.
- b. Develop data systems to support instruction. The current Pearson Virtual School program could be linked to a new system that included special education, career and technical education, and post-secondary education.
- c. Revise the curriculum and improve instruction.
- d. Hire a curriculum specialist who can provide professional development activities and support and participate in the teacher evaluation process.
- e. Develop elective coursework; develop a unique summer school program.
- f. Deliver special education services to eligible youth
  - i. Ensure that services and supports comply with federal and state law.
  - ii. Implement IEPs as written.
  - iii. Provide related services as specified on students' IEPs.
- g. Hire para-professionals to support classroom instruction
- h. Hire clerical staff or paraprofessionals to assist in managing paperwork, scheduling IEP meetings, and retrieving and sending school records.
- i. Develop literacy activities and supports
  - i. Hire media specialists and/or librarians to ensure that all youth have access to the library on a regular basis.
  - ii. Develop intensive reading program that serves students with low literacy levels though regularly scheduled support from reading specialists.
  - iii. Develop facility-wide literacy activities and contests.
- j. Develop a career and technical education (CTE) program
  - i. Ensure that all residents have access to CTE (or post-secondary) education
  - ii. Ensure that CTE courses enable students to earn certificates recognized by industry, trade associations, or the Department of Education.
- k. Review and revise the behavior management system
  - i. Develop a system of positive behavioral supports<sup>26</sup>
  - ii. Work with security, direct care staff, and facility leadership to ensure school and facility behavior management programs are aligned.
- l. Develop a Systematic Plan for student access to post-secondary education
  - i. Develop options for post-secondary education. Develop partnerships with community college programs, and other post-secondary institutions.
  - ii. Expand post-secondary distance learning; include options like CLEP testing and use of on-line post-secondary instruction.

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<sup>26</sup> While PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) exists at some IDJJ facilities, discussions with students and staff indicated that there are often no positive outcomes for students such as special events or activities available to students who perform well.

- iii. Provide support for students preparing for the SAT, ACT, and preparing college applications. Assist students in completing the FAFSA and identifying and applying for college scholarships.
- m. Expand Students Access to Technology<sup>27</sup>
  - i. Improve youth access to and use of instructional and communication technology
  - ii. Ensure that software and hardware meets current standards
- n. Provide Extra-curricular Activities
  - i. Expand facility-wide recreational and cultural activities
- o. Provide Guidance Services. Hire guidance counselors who can assist youth in making academic decisions, tracking credits, and preparing for graduation or program completion.
- p. Support Education Aspects of Students' Transition. Designate staff to assist youth in transition planning for graduation and return to the community.

## **5. External Support and Partnerships**

- a. Expand and strengthen the use of community advisory boards to support special activities
- b. Further develop community partners in the arts, industry, education, & public service
- c. Expand partnerships with faculty in colleges and universities at each facility.

## **6. Quality Assurance and Sustainability**

- a. Develop a system of quality assurance that provides internal feedback on the operation of the education program.
- b. Ensure that key features and elements of the program as described above are measured
- c. Promote a culture of accountability through public dissemination of key indicators of program performance.

## **Education, Disadvantage, and the Future of Marginalized Youth**

In a number of states and the District of Columbia, education services in juvenile corrections have been transformed in recent years.<sup>28</sup> Coupled with changes in mental health services and

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<sup>27</sup> At the Challenger Memorial Youth Center in Los Angeles County, students belong to Kindle clubs and read e-books; others are enrolled in community college course work via local area networks.

conditions of confinement, these reforms have transformed facilities into places where youth strive to do well in school, have hope for the future, and where staff feel more energized and hopeful about their ability to help youth prepare for successful return to the community. With adequate support, many of the recommendations listed in this report can be implemented at minimal cost. Other changes will require legislative or administrative changes that will take time. Phasing in recommended changes over time and across facilities provides the opportunity to generate staff support for changes, fine tune operations, and demonstrate the feasibility of new ways of operating education within the IDJJ. Finally, evidence suggest that evidence-based options including well-designed and implemented education programs, can promote better outcomes for youth as well as fiscal benefits to the State.<sup>29</sup>



September 20, 2013

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<sup>28</sup> Juvenile correctional facilities in Hawaii, Los Angeles County, California, and the District of Columbia have all made major changes to the operation of their education programs in recent years in order to comply with state or federal legislation and the terms of settlement agreements.

<sup>29</sup> See Lee, S., Aos, S., Drake, E., Pennucci, A., Miller, M., & Anderson, L. (2012). Return on investment: Evidence-based options to improve statewide outcomes, April 2012 (Document No. 12-04-1201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/12-04-1201.pdf> Lockner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004) at 3 above; and Leone, P., & Weinberg, L. (2012). Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/ed/edpaper.pdf>



## Appendix: Profiles of IDJJ Youth<sup>30</sup>

WT is a 20 year-old GED recipient from Chicago. At the time he was interviewed, he had spent 7 months at Kewanee and much of the time he was locked down on his unit or cell because there were no post-secondary school programs and no vocational programs available. He reported spending time on the segregation unit where he had no socks, no underwear, and no eating utensils. While on segregation, he stated that he used pieces of Styrofoam to eat some of his meals. During his time at Kewanee he had never been to the library and had only been to the teen center (a recreation area) once.

SK, an 18 year old from Chicago, had been at St. Charles for 5 months at the time I interviewed him. He complained during our interview that students at the facility only went to school for half days. His favorite subject was math and his least favorite was history. He didn't know how many high school credits he had but he wanted to finish school. After he leaves the IDJJ, he said he wanted to get a job but he didn't know what type of work he wanted to do. He reported that he had been enrolled in the wood shop at St. Charles making shelves.

MN, a 17 year-old from Springfield, had been at Kewanee for 9 months when I interviewed him. He felt that the teachers were not teaching him much at all; everything is done on the computer. His favorite author is William Dean Meyers and he is able to get books from the school library. He's interested in becoming a mechanic after finishing high school or getting his GED. He indicated that he has had no experience or opportunity to learn about becoming a mechanic at Kewanee. When asked what changes to the school program he would recommend, he said make the classes into "book classes; some of the kids here can't read."

TD, a 14 year-old from Rock Island, had been at Kewanee for 5 months when I interviewed him. He reported that he didn't like school at Kewanee at all. He said "I'm not good at computer class. I was in special education. There is no special education here." He recommended that the school schedule change so that all students could go to school full time. He's interested in becoming a welder, like his older brother, when he is out of the system. He indicated that he would like to participate in vocational courses if they were available.

AB, a 16 year-old from Kankakee, had been at Harrisburg 6 months when I interviewed him. He said school is "decent" but he claimed that teachers "don't help us." He said, "Teachers say, I don't know, I can't help you."

RT, a 17 year-old from DeKalb, had been at Warrenville 15 months when I interviewed her. Her favorite subject was math; she said that biology and history were her most difficult subjects. She

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<sup>30</sup> In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of youth, the initials and some identifying information in the Appendix were changed.

likes the web-based instruction and being able to work at her own pace. She said that some other girls do not like the on-line instruction. She belonged to a book club at Warrenville that meets monthly; when I interviewed the group was reading *The Other Wes Moore*. She recommended that the facility have student government and more speakers. She said that the best part of her day was going back to her cottage and going to sleep.

CA, a 17 year-old from Joliet, arrived at Harrisburg in December 2012. He has a high school diploma and is interested in taking business management courses after he leaves the IDJJ. He is an avid reader and said James Patterson and Dan Brown were his favorite authors. He complained that it was very difficult to get books at Harrisburg because there is no librarian and because he is not in school.

TK, a 17 year-old from East St. Louis, was interviewed in the confinement unit at Harrisburg. He claimed that this was his fourth placement at Harrisburg. He was in confinement nearly two weeks because there were not enough beds on Unit 2; while on confinement he was locked down 24/7 and stated that he was only out of his cell once each day for a shower.

PD, a 19 year-old from Peoria, had been at St. Charles for two months when I interviewed him. He claimed that he learned “stuff” in school but that school was just a half day. When there is no teacher, “we just get placed in the library or gym.” He said that school was boring and that he doesn’t know why students don’t get any homework. His recommendations for improving the school included more fun activities, full-time school, recess time in gym, and homework.