

# EDUCATION SERVICES

*Terri Eggers, Ed.S, M.S.C.J*

*Director of Education*

*(850) 922-5375*

[Terri.Eggers@djj.state.fl.us](mailto:Terri.Eggers@djj.state.fl.us)



Section 1003.52(1), Florida Statutes, states “the Legislature found that education is the single most important factor in the rehabilitation of adjudicated delinquent youth in the custody of Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs.” The Department of Education (DOE) serves as the lead agency for juvenile justice education programs, curriculum, support services, and resources. DOE and DJJ each designate a Tallahassee based Coordinator for Juvenile Justice Education Programs to help resolve and participate in the following activities:

- training, collaborating, and coordinating with the Department of Juvenile Justice, district school boards, educational contract providers, and juvenile justice providers, whether state operated or contracted;
- collecting information on the academic performance of students in juvenile justice programs and reporting on the result;
- developing academic and career protocols that provide guidance to district school boards and providers in all aspects of education programming, including records transfer and transition; and
- prescribing the roles of program personnel and interdepartmental district school board or provider-collaboration strategies.

On any given day school districts provide educational services to approximately 13,535 students in juvenile justice facilities at an annual cost of \$94,582,719 (FY 2007-08). DOE states that 14% of these students scored at level three or above on reading as indicated by the FCAT. Further, 19% scored at three or above on math, 89% were promoted, 17% graduated, and 96% of the 229 students that took the GED test passed, constituting 69% of the high school graduates within DJJ programs earning a Florida high school diploma. The remaining 31% of youth earned a standard diploma.

A stipend of less than \$1000 per student is available to each juvenile justice educational program from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) with a reduced class-size provision. This helps to pay the cost of serving these students throughout the year in small settings with a mobile student population, ensuring student and teacher safety, training, adequacy of the learning environment, maintenance, and retrofitting of facilities for DOE-mandated student access to the Internet.

State-level oversight provides accountability for students placed in juvenile justice programs. State and local efforts also work to recognize the dedicated personnel working with these students through a regional and statewide Juvenile Justice Teacher of the Year event incorporated within an annual statewide training event.

The 1999 Juvenile Justice Education Institute, initiated as a result of a 1998 OPPAGA study, was the first forum for honoring juvenile justice educators of the year. School districts have since included these teachers in their district wide efforts and many have since been honored by their local school districts.

### **Training and Coordination**

Approximately 2,912 persons were trained during FY 2008-09. Educational programs and resources are available to youth served by juvenile justice prevention, intervention, day-treatment, detention, residential-commitment programs, and those provided with services following completion of a residential program. Juvenile justice programs strive to maintain educational coursework comparable to each student's prior schedule. Many programs serve youth that have not been attending school prior to their juvenile justice system involvement. Some programs are unable to replicate schedules owing to teacher certification requirements.

Several school districts and residential programs are working to increase credit recovery, distance learning, reading remediation, and vocational training. Students have greater options when school personnel maximize available resources and integrate a variety of educational opportunities into the available programming. Quality assurance standards direct the timely transfer of records. DOE offers a technical assistance paper on transition. A listing of juvenile justice educational programs by responsible school districts, transition resources, and prospective services from regional workforce boards is located at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Education/index.html>.

### **Academic Performance**

An emphasis on school and community-based prevention is essential to developing alternatives to arrest and incarceration. According to the U.S. Department of Education in 2001, 70% of prison inmates were functionally illiterate and 85% of juvenile offenders were illiterate. Illiteracy costs the United States more than \$225 billion a year in lost productivity.

Educational statutes mandate a quality assurance process administered by DOE and an education coordinator funded by DJJ. Efforts include state and provider program monitoring, contract management, self-evaluation, school district designated transition contacts, mandated annual review of all juvenile justice cooperative agreements and contracts, and data and progress monitoring. Juvenile justice education quality assurance reports are submitted to school superintendents. Annual reports are submitted to the Florida Legislature by DOE and DJJ.

The Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program tracks juvenile justice student involvement with quarterly reports based upon social security numbers reported to DOE. According to their findings, youth attending post-secondary education, employed or both, had lower rates of recidivism.

DOE distributes the results of the state required academic assessment tests. Programs serving youth a minimum of nine weeks had 1,514 students completing a valid pre-/post-test in math with 62% demonstrating

meaningful gains and 1,499 students completing a valid pre-/post-test in reading with 66% demonstrating meaningful gains.

The Florida Juvenile Justice Foundation (FJJF) is continuing the William Bankhead Scholarship in partnership with the DJJ Office of Education. A partnership formed with the Tallahassee Community College (TCC) Foundation in the fall of 2006 piloted legislatively available matching funds for scholarships. TCC has established a "New Start" scholarship available to former youth offenders. A total of 127 students received scholarships from FJJF. These scholarships range from awarding college tuition to 30 students in residential commitment programs to providing tool sets for graduates of the Homebuilders Institute program. African American youth were 69% of the scholarship recipients.

Research has shown that participation in the arts leads to enhanced academic progress and improved test scores and social skills, which are essential ingredients of successful employment. DJJ has a continuing relationship with VSA Arts of Florida. This program makes it possible for artists to work with youth in prevention, detention, day-treatment, and residential settings. Youth benefit from the instruction of professional artists. Over 30 applications were received for \$4000 of total available funds in increments of \$500 grants. In FY 2008-09, VSA Arts of Florida provided artists in residence programs at the following sites:

- Cypress Creek Juvenile Offender Correctional Center;
- Broward Intensive Halfway House;
- Impact House, Duval County;
- Marion Regional Juvenile Detention Center;
- Okeechobee Juvenile Offender Correction Center;
- Price Halfway House, Lee County;
- St. John's Regional Detention Center; and
- Jackson Juvenile Offender Correction Center.

Each of Florida's juvenile justice educational programs is subject to district reading plans and school improvement plans. They have specific reading materials that complement those available through the educational program and encourage reading. DJJ also surveys juvenile justice programs annually to assess program progress in areas not captured by the DOE student database or the DJJ Juvenile Justice Information System.

## Career Protocols

Older adolescents involved with DJJ are often dependent upon the state to prepare for self-sufficiency. The Eckerd Family Foundation funded a study describing the needs of employers, and the challenges present when educators and social workers take much of the responsibility for ensuring job readiness among this population. The study titled "Y-Works" is available at: <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Education/careereducation.html>.

DOE tracks student participation in career and technical education. As of May 2008, 14,230 students were enrolled in career and technical education coursework within juvenile justice programs statewide. DJJ contributes to career development by supporting local partnerships, grants, training, and community involvement, providing access to the Internet, and making technical assistance available. The Department also has a statutory responsibility to designate each facility as either level one, two, or three, which is a descriptor referencing the degree of vocational involvement a program is able to offer students. On May 17, 2007, Administrative Rule 63B-1 was enacted addressing career-related programs within the Department. This was developed to define the responsibilities of the Department and contract providers relating to vocational and career programs. Since the implementation of this rule, programs are equipping youth with documentation essential to employment to the extent possible within residential settings. Over 742 youths exited programs with a valid state identification card during FY 2008-09. To view the rule in its entirety, please visit: <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=63B-1>.

All juvenile justice programs must teach personal accountability skills and behaviors that lead to work habits that help maintain employment and living standards and are considered a "Type One," according to Florida Statute 985.3155. Of 146 self-contained juvenile justice education programs, 70 programs are reported as a "Type Two" also providing an orientation to a variety of career choices, based upon personal abilities, aptitudes, and interests. A total of 20 programs are considered to be a "Type Three" incorporating opportunities for students to demonstrate vocational competencies and prerequisites needed for entry into a specific occupation. A current list reflecting the level of vocational offering of each of the state's juvenile justice education programs is available at: [http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Education/education\\_status.html](http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Education/education_status.html).

DJJ contributed to meeting its statutory requirement to provide vocational training with development of "Type Three" programs through contracts with Homebuilders Institute (HBI). Upon completion of programs incorporating HBI, youth exit the program with academic credits leading toward graduation in addition to industry-recognized, construction-related certifications. HBI also assists with job placement, transition, and follow-up. In FY 2008-09, HBI ran Project CRAFT which provided vocational programs in two community-based programs and four residential programs. These programs awarded 214 nationally recognized Pre-Apprenticeship Certificates. A combined total of 98% of students receiving their certificate were placed in jobs, school, or the military with an average wage of \$8.45 an hour. Project CRAFT students completed 37,987 community-service hours around the state to local nonprofit organizations and municipalities worth approximately \$273,886. In partnership with local school districts or private educational providers, 24 students received their high school diploma and 52 students earned a GED.

DOE has also facilitated “Type Three” programs with annual awards of Carl D. Perkins grants submitted by responsible school districts. Grant applications include the incorporation of the Ready to Work initiative as a prerequisite and the Ready to Work program that is separately provided by the DOE contingent upon available funding. DOE awarded \$450,000 in grants for the 2009-10 school year, which included:

• G4S Avon Park YA (Polk)	Vocational Trades	\$ 19,064.00
• Twin Oaks (Liberty)	Welding	75,000.00
• PACE (Broward)	PACEWorks!	75,000.00
• G4S/Hastings YA (St. Johns)	Digital Design & Organic Gardening	75,000.00
• Okeechobee Alt HS (Okeechobee)	Bldg Construction Tech (Greenhouse)	75,000.00
• Twin Oaks (Liberty)	Landscape Operations	75,000.00
• Univ. Health /Bristol YA (Liberty)	Bldg Construction Technology	55,936.00

Florida has made significant strides in serving post-secondary needs with funding from the Ready to Work program, implementation of the Shared Case Management Pilot project by Agency for Workforce Innovation and Workforce Florida, Inc., and by awarding the Youth Investment Grant from the Eckerd Family Foundation. DOE passed an administrative rule in February 2009 authorizing community colleges throughout Florida to allow DJJ documents to verify eligibility of parental residence within Florida allowing youth to attend community college with in-state tuition.

Workforce Florida, Inc. has a Youth Opportunities Council that focuses on developing policy and advancing programs that help Florida’s youth enter and advance in the workforce through learning, training, and earning opportunities. Most of this work is accomplished with federal funds provided to the state to assist youth with acquiring and building on skills that will lead to employment and career opportunities. This year a specific Strengthening Youth Opportunities request for proposals was developed focusing on court-involved youth, which mirrors the federal Shared Youth Vision. Twin Oaks Juvenile Development, Inc., was awarded the \$350,000 grant allowing for the previously field-tested “Project Connect” model to be reestablished for youth in four juvenile justice education programs in north Florida providing for youth-centered community action teams, individualized case management and linkages with regional workforce boards in each of the home communities of youth transitioning.

Several of Florida’s 24 Regional Workforce Boards committed summer youth employment funding to support skills development for juvenile justice-involved youth. More information on Workforce Florida-led initiatives and youth training and employment resources are available through Regional Workforce Boards’ information posted at: <http://www.EmployFlorida.com>.

## Collaboration Strategies

The DJJ Office of Education participates in the DOE/DJJ Interagency Workgroup established by Section 1003.52(1)(d), Florida Statutes, prescribing the roles of program personnel and interdepartmental district, school board or provider collaboration strategies. In addition, the DJJ Office of Education supports the Department's Strategic Plan and Long-Range Program Plan, providing guidance and direction regarding the provision of educational and vocational policy, programming, and services for youth in the care of DJJ and its providers. This office collaborates with all DJJ program offices, as well as with DOE, district school boards, program providers, other state and federal agencies, and community stakeholders, connecting DJJ program offices with public and private local, state, and federal entities.

As set forth in the Department's Strategic Plan, the following objectives have been implemented to enhance educational and vocational programs:

- provide training and educational programs for youth in the juvenile justice system to help them in job acquisition and retention;
- develop and implement programs that will identify individual needs of youth and provide programs to help them transition to the community and become successful adults; and
- eliminate barriers in multi-agency collaboration in the delivery of services for at-risk youth.

Prevention programs with a full-time, self-contained educational program are funded by DJJ through contracts with Outward Bound, PACE Centers for Girls, and AMIKids.

Since 1983, both Outward Bound and Children in Need of Services/Families In Need of Services (CINS/FINS) programs have provided prevention services to youths and families. The CINS/FINS program focus on behavioral gains and has improved social skills by 27% in less than three weeks.

In FY 2008-09, PACE served 2,072 girls in grades 6-12. The average age of girls at PACE was 14.7 years. Academically, PACE girls were, on average, two years behind grade-level peers in school. 95% of girls improved academically as indicated through GPAs, credits earned or grade-level promotions.

In FY 2008-09, AMIKids in Florida served 4,631 kids in grades 6 thru 12. The average age of students attending an AMIKids programs was 16 years. All students enrolled in AMIKids participated in experiential education opportunities designed to address progression towards high school graduation, collaborative learning opportunities and challenging activities that push students to excel in school.