Academic achievement predicts future avoidance of delinquency for incarcerated youths who return to school when released.

Research has shown that educational success decreases the likelihood of youths becoming delinquent. Now, new research conducted at Florida State University shows that high-quality juvenile justice education programs reduce the delinquency rates in youths released from incarceration.

FSU’s Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research conducted a study of 4,147 youths released from 101 juvenile justice institutions throughout Florida. The data was compiled from two sources: the Florida Department of Education and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. The research found the following to be true:

- Educational achievement, as measured by above average completion of courses such as English, math, social studies, and science while incarcerated, was strongly correlated with youths returning to school after being released. The mandatory policy for school attendance while incarcerated provided an opportunity for these youths to experience educational achievement and stronger school attachment.
- Youths who return to school and attend school regularly after release are significantly less likely to be rearrested within 12 to 24 months.
- The more time youths spend in school after release significantly reduces the severity of their first re-offense within both 12 and 24 months. This finding suggests that those youths who return to and stay in school are more strongly attached to school and are becoming more committed to a conventional, law-abiding lifestyle.

These findings are a cause for optimism regarding the future prospects for incarcerated youths. The 2002 No Child Left Behind federal educational reform act requires that incarcerated youths receive the same high quality educational services as those received by students in public schools. Though implementing these reforms into juvenile justice education is a significant challenge, this research indicates that doing so may lead a greater number of incarcerated youths to make a successful transition away from delinquency.