

An Evaluation of the Educational Services for Youth in the Polk County Jail

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Criminology & Criminal Justice
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An Evaluation of the Educational Services for Youth in the Polk County Jail

FINAL REPORT

George Pesta

Associate Director

Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research

gpesta@fsu.edu

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AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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OVERVIEW

On August 8, 2013 the Polk County School Board entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Southern Poverty Law Center regarding the level and quality of educational services provided youth in the Polk County Central jail. The Polk County Central Jail is located at 2390 Bob Phillips Rd. Bartow, FL 33830. The Polk County Sherriff's Office is responsible for the administration and security at the jail and is required to follow the Florida Model Jail Standards as administered by the Florida Sherriff's Association and the Florida Association of Counties. In addition, the Sherriff's office has an active agreement with the Polk County School Board for the provision of educational services for Juvenile and Direct File youth in the jail. Overall the jail is designed to house 800 inmates. Inmate populations include: adult females, adult males, adult trusty inmates, pre-adjudicated juveniles and juveniles that have been direct filed as adults. Juveniles and Direct Files are held in separate housing areas away from the adult inmates.

The school board provides education services to three distinct populations within the jail; Juvenile youth, Direct File youth and female youth. Pre-adjudicated youth are defined as "Juveniles" under the age of 18 (at the time of their offense) who are awaiting their juvenile court date. Once the Juveniles are adjudicated they are either committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice and transferred from the jail or they are released back to their community. These youth have short lengths of stay generally ranging from one to fifteen days. The Direct File youth are those under the age of 18 at the time of their offences, but the State's Attorney's office chose to transfer the cases from the juvenile court and file it in the adult criminal court. These youth may spend up to 18 months in the jail and some eventually transfer to the Department of Corrections or to the South County jail upon their 18th birthday. The female youth comprise both Juveniles and Direct Files, but remain separated from the adult and juvenile males for both custody and education.

Each group of youth remain separated in different wings of the jail and each group has their own classrooms and teachers. In addition, the Juveniles and Direct Files are treated separately by the school administration. Each group has their own lead educator, school registrar and transition personnel. Special education personnel and services are shared across groups.

Currently, the Juveniles are educated in a portable at the back of the jail complex that houses two classrooms, a computer lab and a small library. Staff for this wing include two teachers, a para-professional and a school resource officer (SRO) whose salary is partially supported by the school board. The Direct Files are educated inside a primary jail building that has two classrooms near their pods. This group is educated by two teachers and a paraprofessional. Juvenile and Direct File females are mixed for education in one classroom on the second floor of a primary jail building. The educational staff for the females consists of one teacher.

On the week of the first site visit in December, 2013 there were a total of 84 youth including 35 Juveniles and 49 Direct Files. This included 77 males and seven females. In addition, 30 of the 84 youth were identified as needing special education services.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

This evaluation employs a process evaluation framework that is focused upon the verification of educational services provided to the youth housed in the Polk County Central Jail. The specific evaluation areas were drawn from the concerns highlighted in the settlement agreement between the Polk County School Board and the Southern Poverty Law Center and Florida's Educational Quality Assurance Standards for Juvenile Detention Centers. These standards were originally developed by the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program and the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. Funded by the Florida Department of Education, from 1998 to 2010 JJEEP was responsible for conducting annual quality assurance reviews of all of Florida's juvenile justice educational programs. The educational quality assurance standards are based upon state and federal educational requirements, best practice research, and practitioner input. Moreover, the standards were revised annually using input from educational administrators throughout the state during standards revision meetings, as new evidence was obtained through a continuous review of the literature, and as new federal requirements emerged such as No Child Left Behind. Finally, the educational quality assurance standards were validated by JJEEP through longitudinal research of youth released from juvenile justice programs throughout the state and case studies of high- and low-performing programs. JJEEP's model of quality assurance, technical assistance, research and policy in the field of juvenile justice education has been recognized by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the American Correctional Association (ACA) as a model demonstration program and has been promulgated in numerous states throughout the nation.

The reported findings and recommendations are drawn from a preponderance of evidence from multiple sources of data compiled through staff and student interviews, observations and a review of school documentation including student files during two site visits. The first 3-day site visit occurred from December 4 through December 6, 2013; the second 4-day site visit occurred from January 28 through January 31, 2014. Each site visit included discussions and debriefings with school district administrators to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations. School personnel were provided opportunities to supply missing information and/or clarify information both during and after the site visits.

Documents reviewed included, but were not limited to, 20 student files, teacher certifications, teaching assignments, in-service training records, attendance records, school district policies, New Century Education performance results, curriculum materials, course schedules, bell schedules, school calendars, and other school administrative documents. Observations included at least two observations in each of the five classrooms, teacher in-service observations, and general observations of school activities. Classroom observations included a review of teacher lesson plans, student work-folders, and the use of curriculum materials. Interviews regarding school practices, policies and work related activities included all six teachers (includes one long-term substitute and a new replacement teacher) transition and special education personnel, lead educators, school registrars, school administrators and 11 youth. Personnel interviews were conducted independently and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each. Some personnel were interviewed more than once with follow-up and clarification questions. Youth interviews generally lasted less than 30 minutes.

Evaluation Standards, Findings and Recommendations

1 – Enrollment & Advising Standards

- There is a process in place to identify new students and enroll them based upon a review of past records and core academic course requirements. Enrollment should include elementary, middle, and high school courses that address reading, English/language arts, math, social studies, and science curricula, as needed for student progression
- Advising all students with regard to their individual abilities, educational and occupational opportunities, diploma options and communicating their educational status and progress
- Providing report cards/progress reports to parents based on school district policy for regular schools

Findings

Upon entry, Juvenile male students are placed in either a middle school or high school classroom. Females are taught separately as one group including middle school, high school, Juvenile and Direct File. Based on a review of 20 student files, Juveniles are enrolled in full course schedules that include courses in English, math, social studies, science, intensive reading and personal career and school development. Schedules are based upon the courses students are currently taking in their prior school or their most recent transcript.

Direct File students are placed in one of two groups based upon their pod and are not divided by grade or ability level. For Direct File students, three files were missing current course schedules. In addition, course schedules for the Direct File students for the Fall of 2013 and Spring 2014 were developed after the semesters began. While the Fall Semester began August 19, course schedules were not completed until mid-September. Direct file students are enrolled in English, math, intensive reading, either science or social studies (depending on the semester) and two electives, typically critical thinking skills and career research and decision making. The decision to not offer both science and social studies was based upon teacher certification requirements, however, this limits students' abilities to progress toward a high school diploma at the expected rate. On one student's schedule the resource teacher was listed as the teacher of instruction, but they do not actually teach the class.

Guidance services are provided to both Juvenile and Direct File students through the school's transition specialists. The transition specialist for the Juvenile students meets with individuals to discuss grades, credits and school reentry. Juvenile student files also contained a memo explaining the school reentry process for Polk County and a general academic success plan for the Detention Center School. Though services are not consistently documented, evidence of meetings with students regarding grades, credits earned and attendance were present in student files. For Direct File students there was less documented evidence of guidance services. Evidence of report cards prior to Fall 2013 were missing. Report cards were generated in the Fall, but copies were not consistently placed in student files. Report cards in January, 2014 were reviewed with students and copies were in the process of being mailed home at the time of the evaluation. Student interviews indicate that school transition and guidance personnel meet and talk with students regarding their school performance and guidance. This semester the school has begun to have students sign report cards after they review them.

Recommendations

- Long-term students should be enrolled in both social studies and science so that they have the opportunity to progress toward a high school diploma, or its equivalent, at a similar rate to students in regular schools.
- All guidance services provided, report cards, progress reports and school correspondence home should be consistently documented in student files.
- Transition Coordinators and guidance personnel should maintain a log of guidance services provided to students.

2 – Assessment & Planning Standards

- Administering an assessment for reading and math within 10 school days of entry
- Administering a career assessment within 22 school days of entry to enhance employability, career and technical instruction
- Using entry assessment results and past records to develop age and grade appropriate individual academic plans (IAPs) for all non ESE students. IAPs are:
 - Developed within 22 school days
 - Are used to guide instruction and guidance services
 - Include specific, individualized and measurable goals and objectives for reading, language arts and math
 - Identify remedial strategies
 - Include a schedule for determining progress

Findings

Based upon a review of 20 student files, all Juvenile and Direct File students are tested in reading and math upon entry with the New Century Education (NCE) learning software. Juvenile students are also tested for their career interest using Choices, however, Direct File students do not receive a career assessment. Two student files were missing testing information, but the information was provided upon request. The school does not develop individual academic plans (IAPs) for long-term, non-ESE students.

Recommendations

- Direct File students should receive the Choices career interest inventory upon entry in to the program.
- Choices should be used as the basis for career instruction and the development of individual career planning.
- IAPs should be developed for long-term students who remain in the jail for more than 22 school days. IAPs should include specific, individualized and measurable goals and objectives for reading, language arts and math; they should identify remedial strategies and they should include a schedule for determining progress. IAPs should be used to guide instruction and guidance services.

3 – Exit Transition Services Standards

- Maintaining a Transition Coordinator at the jail for the purpose of providing transition and reentry services, planning and programming
- Documenting transmittal of students' educational records, that include school district withdrawal forms with numerical grades in progress, to their next educational placements **at the time of exit** (Students' days in attendance and current transcripts should be accessible via the MIS.)
- Developing exit transition plans, for long-term students, that include students' desired diploma options, anticipated next educational placements, post-release educational plans, aftercare providers, job or career/technical training plans, and parties responsible for implementing the plans

Findings

The Juvenile and female classrooms are assigned a full-time education Transition Coordinator. Duties include conducting interviews with ESE students within the first couple of days after entry, reviewing credits and promotion status with students, meeting with non-attending students, and sending non-attendance letters home after five absences. Students are also provided with a letter explaining Polk County School's reentry process. However, not all students have the same school reentry options depending on their delinquent act, prior school performance and other factors. Withdrawal forms and documented grades in progress are being completed and sent to the students' home schools. Individualized school reentry planning is not conducted.

The Direct File classrooms have a part-time registrar that also serves as the Transition Coordinator. Duties include student enrollment, registration, course scheduling, and meeting with students to review credits and report cards. Meeting with non-attending students is being handled by a classroom teacher. Although there is evidence that students are currently receiving report cards and there have been meetings to discuss their school performance, previous semesters lack documentation of transition and guidance services for the Direct File students. Further, after their criminal trial or after they turn 18 years of age, Direct File students may be transferred to the South County jail, may be transferred to the Department of Corrections or they may be released. Educational planning based upon each student's needs, diploma options and post-placement opportunities is not currently being conducted.

Recommendations

- A clear procedure should be developed and adhered to regarding when students receive guidance and transition services. At a minimum the procedure should articulate an initial interview with new students; a follow-up interview to discuss current school performance, status and assessment results; the development of IAPs and initial reentry planning; progress meetings every nine weeks and final reentry planning meetings.
- With assistance from the Transition Coordinators, long-term students should develop exit transition plans that prepare them for reentry into school and/or employment if appropriate. Transition plans should be based upon the educational interests, abilities and post-release opportunities for each student.
- Long-term students should develop portfolios that include their post-release educational and career plans, goals, transcripts, resumes and accomplishments.

4 – Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Services Standards

- Convening Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and/or amending IEPs to include measurable annual goals and short-term objectives that directly relate to student’s identified academic, behavioral and functional deficiencies and needs (settlement agreement stipulates within 10 school days)
- Implementing students’ IEPs, Limited English Proficient (LEPs), Section 504 plans as written including the provision of services such as counseling, psychological and speech and language
- Reviewing progress on IEP goals and objectives and providing IEP progress reports to parents as often as progress reports are sent home for all students

Findings

The school’s registrars and transition specialists review students’ records and meet with students to identify those in need of ESE services. There is also an ESE specialist assigned to the school to review and develop new IEPs. Seven ESE student files were reviewed and two files of students with 504 Plans. Of the seven ESE student files reviewed, five of them took on average one month to complete the IEP process, resulting in new IEPs. One took nearly three months to complete and one student was missed; the process not being initiated after two months in the jail.

Regarding services, the school district has speech, language and mental health professionals on contract to provide these associated services. These individuals maintain documentation that they visit the jail regularly and meet with assigned students as required in their IEPs. However, other services such as providing specific students with “daily behavioral feedback” and/or providing a specific amount of minutes per week of a targeted activity such as “organizational skills training” is not documented by teachers. 504 Plans and accommodations are shared with teachers, however, if special services such as behavioral prompts are required, this is not documented by the teachers.

Progress reports for ESE Juveniles were maintained in students’ ESE files. However, only two ESE progress reports could be retrieved for the Direct File students.

Recommendations

- ESE identification and the IEP process should be consistently initiated upon student entry and completed within 20 school days.
- Student consult logs should be maintained for all students that have specifically identified services, even if these services are provided by the classroom teacher during the course of the instructional day.
- All classroom teachers should document that ESE services are provided.
- The school district should monitor the provision of ESE services including all consult services and services provided directly by classroom teachers.
- All ESE students and their parents should receive progress reports as often as report cards are sent home for other students as required by IDEA. Copies of progress reports and proof of mailing them home should be maintained in student files.

5 – Classroom and Behavior Management Standards

- Implementing the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) model in all classrooms
- Ensuring that teachers and educational staff are properly trained in the PBIS system
- Ensuring that student absences are monitored including individually documenting students' refusals to participate in school, maintaining excused and unexcused absentee records, and providing notices to parents regarding truancy according to school district policies

Findings

The program has begun the process of implementing the PBIS system. In December, teachers and school staff received an initial training in PBIS from a school district trainer. In addition, in January PBIS staff from the school district and the University of South Florida conducted classroom observations throughout the jail. However, several meetings between the PBIS and school staff and trainings are needed before the system can be implemented.

Classroom observations conducted during both site visits indicated very little behavioral problems in the classrooms. The Juvenile students have a school resource officer (SRO) assigned to the classroom portable whose salary is partially paid by the school district. The SRO works well with the students and was observed on several occasions assisting them with school work as well as providing appropriate behavioral prompts. The Direct File classrooms do not have an SRO. Sheriff Deputies are located in a central area outside of the classrooms and are called for assistance when needed. Observations in the females' classroom indicated that female Sheriff Deputies were often present in the classroom, but not always.

The school has recently developed an attendance policy and has begun following the school district's attendance procedures. When Juvenile and female students do not attend class the transition specialist meets with them to discuss why they are not attending. After five and ten days of non-attendance letters are to be sent home to parents indicating the student's truancy. Possibly due to the longer lengths of stay, attendance is of greater concern with the Direct File students. For example, during the first site visit 14 of the 49 Direct File students enrolled in school were recorded as being absent for three or more days of the five-day week. Attendance records from Fall 2014 indicate that numerous students had an absentee rate approximating 20% while some students' absentee rates went as high as 40% and 50%. According to interviews with staff, non-attendance letters are starting to be sent home to parents. However, copies were not maintained in student files and interviews indicate that letters were not sent on a consistent basis. Students who do attend class are provided behavioral rewards such as chips and candy.

Recommendations

- The school district should accelerate their efforts to implement PBIS.
- All non-attending students should be met with daily and be documented. Five and ten day non-attendance letters should be sent home immediately after the non-attendance occurs. Copies of the letters and proof of mailing should be maintained in student files.
- Student work and accomplishments and educational materials should be displayed in Direct File classrooms.

6 – Curriculum & Instruction Standards

- Providing literacy skills activities, tutorial and remedial strategies, and social skills programs to students in the jails for less than 21 school days and using assessment results to guide instruction
- Individualizing instruction for students in the jail for 22 school days or more based upon the course requirements and standards for the courses in which students are enrolled
- Using a variety of instructional strategies to engage students in learning activities

Findings

The curriculum for the Juvenile students consists of instruction in English, math, social studies, science, intensive reading and an elective such as peer counseling. Due to the short lengths of stay and the fact that the majority of the Juvenile students return to a public school upon their release, the teachers focus on maintaining traditional academic instruction through packets, worksheets and textbooks so that grades in progress can be sent back to the student's home school. The school is limited in guest speakers and thematic instruction and the peer counseling class is mostly used for remediation using the NCE computer lab. A Women's organization visits the female classroom weekly to discuss health, reproduction, STDs, and parenting. Teachers maintain lesson plans and are currently working to develop three-week mini lessons.

Curriculum and instruction for the Direct File students is limited. According to student course schedules, Direct File students are enrolled in English, math, social studies, intensive reading and two electives such as critical thinking skills and career research and decision making. Students did not receive instruction in science classes in the Fall of 2013 and were not receiving instruction in social studies for Spring 2014. Though students are in class for 300 minutes per day there is little evidence of direct instruction or student performance. Of the 40 some students in Direct File, only six could show activities accomplished and progress made on the New Century Education system. In addition, student work folders revealed that English and reading are taught using social studies materials which mostly consist of worksheets generated from Ed Helper. Student work folders contained little evidence of academic activities and do not contain evidence of career testing or planning being conducted as part of the career classes. Lesson plans were also missing for the Direct File classes. Observations indicated that computer games at the end of the day and movies on Friday are a regular occurrence and are not related to academics or behavior. Overall, academic course requirements and standards are not being addressed and students are not receiving instruction based upon the courses in which they are specifically enrolled. When direct instruction occurs it generally is geared toward a general academic lesson and does not reflect individual student course assignments.

Neither school in the jail uses the assessments and curricula listed in the school district's comprehensive reading plan such as the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR Testing), Discovery Education, Six-Minute Solution, or Red Brick High Five Reading.

Currently, the school does not offer any hands-on career and technical education courses. In addition, the elective career awareness and employability classes are based on general textbook lessons and do not reflect student's individual career interests, abilities, aptitudes or post-release plans.

Recommendations

- To prepare students for a return to school, lessons for short-term students can be incorporated into the academic curriculum or offered in the peer counseling class that address social skills, study skills, guidance and school reentry planning as appropriate.
- The program should meet with the Sheriff's Administration and request dividing the Direct File students into the two classrooms based upon their age, grade and ability levels.
- The school should offer a formal GED program and/or the GED Exit Option. Long-term students should be afforded the opportunity to take the GED in the jail. The program should become a Pearson View GED testing site.
- The program should follow the district reading plan including using the approved reading curriculum, materials and testing.
- English and reading instruction need to be offered daily to Direct File students using approved district curricula and materials and evidence-based instructional strategies for reading.
- Based on the absence of evidence for writing, the school should consider daily writing activities such as reading journals, poetry contests, writing journals, etc.
- The program should solicit and document guest speakers and community projects.
- The program should consider offering a CTE course and industry certifications to long-term students such as ServSafe, OSHA, IC3, Microsoft, etc. To determine the most appropriate CTE program, careful consideration should be given to the average length of stay of the students, security concerns, local employment opportunities, and the interests and aptitudes of the types of students served in the jail.
- The program should follow-through with its plans to offer hands-on activities such as masonry.
- English, math, science and social studies and upper level high school courses should be offered to long-term students based upon their graduation needs.

7 – Educational Resources Standards

- Providing adequate educational resources that include educational support staff, technology, and instructional materials
- Ensuring that students receive a minimum of 300 minutes of daily instruction or the weekly equivalent. The school year for Direct File students shall consist of 180 days of direct instruction and 240 days for pre-adjudicated delinquents

Findings

The school operates a schedule that includes a 240 day calendar for Juvenile students and a 180 day calendar for the Direct File students. Bell schedules and observations indicate that students are in class for 300 minutes per day. However, the bell schedule for the Direct File classrooms does not indicate breaks, lunch or the specific subjects for each instructional period.

Overall, the school has one administrator (also oversees other schools), two resource teachers (one Juvenile and one Direct File), two registrars (one works with other schools), a transition specialist (Juvenile), an ESE consultant and an ESE staffing specialist (works with other

schools as well) five classroom teachers, two para-professionals and one SRO. In addition, the school district has speech and language and mental health counselors under contract to provide services to specific students as needed.

The female student classroom contains appropriate textbooks, a small library, reference materials, a white board, teacher computer/workstation and four computer/workstations for students. Computers are used for NCE computer assisted instruction and remediation in reading and math, Choices career interest testing and word processing for class assignments. One teacher teaches all of the female classes throughout the day. The Juvenile school includes two classrooms with appropriate state and county approved textbooks, a room that is used for testing, a small library and a 13 workstation computer lab. Like the female classroom, the computer lab is used for NCE computer assisted instruction and remediation in reading and math and Choices career interest testing. The Direct File classrooms include required textbooks, however, many of these were not present during the first visit and the school lacks evidence of their use to provide the instruction for the specific courses in which individual students are enrolled. One of the Direct File classrooms also contains 14 computer workstations for students. Workstations are primarily used for NCE computer assisted instruction and remediation in reading and math.

Audio/visual equipment is available for all classrooms. However, the school lacks internet for student instruction, Smart Boards, LCD projectors, hands-on manipulatives, basic laboratory materials and any materials or equipment for career and technical education opportunities.

Recommendations

- The school district should ensure that all classrooms are provided with internet access for testing (i.e. FAIR, GED, EOCs, FCAT) and online learning.
- The school district should use online educational opportunities such as,
 - Choices career testing and planning
 - Florida Ready to Work
 - Polk Virtual School
 - Florida Virtual School
 - Pearson GED testing
 - FCAT and GED test preparation
 - Credit recovery and advance classes for long-term upper high school students

8 – Staff Qualifications Standards

- Hiring core academic teachers who have Florida professional or temporary teaching certification and who are dually certified in special education and the core academic area they are assigned to teach; hiring noncore academic teachers who have teaching certification or documented approval to teach, according to the school board policy for use of noncertified instructional personnel based on documented expert knowledge/skill
- Ensuring that teachers participate in a beginning teacher program, as appropriate, and receive professional development throughout the year or continuing education based on educational program needs, actual instructional assignments, the school improvement plan (SIP), and professional development plans

Findings

The following table includes certification and teaching assignment information on the six teachers who were teaching during the evaluation period. One teacher in the Direct File program left the school during the evaluation process and a new teacher was hired. Currently, three of the five teachers have professional teaching certifications, one has a temporary and one is a long-term substitute. Three of the five teachers are certified in ESE and one has a reading endorsement.

Teacher	Certification	Area	Teaching Assignment
Direct File 1 -no longer at jail	Professional	ESE ESOL Middle Grades Integrated Political Science 6-12 Elementary Education K-6 Coaching Endorsement	Middle and High School -Social Studies -Critical Thinking -Career Preparation
Direct File 2	Temporary	ESE Middle Grades Integrated	Middle and High School -Math -Science -Career Preparation
Direct File 3	Substitute	Long-term Substitute	Middle and High School -English -Intensive Reading -Critical Thinking
Juvenile 1	Professional	Middle Grades English 5-9 ESOL Middle Grades Gen. Science Middle Grades Integrated Agriculture 6-12	Middle School -English -Math -Social Studies -Science -Intensive Reading -Peer Counseling
Juvenile 2	Professional	ESE Elementary Education K-6 English 6-12 ESOL Middle Grades Integrated Reading Endorsement	High School -English -Math -Social Studies -Science -Intensive Reading -Peer Counseling
Females	Professional	ESE Middle Grades Integrated Marketing 6-12	Middle and High School -English -Math -Social Studies -Science -Intensive Reading -Peer Counseling

Recent in-service training has mostly consisted of “Action Research,” PBIS, and content area training within the certification areas of the teachers. The same in-service training

opportunities that are available to all Polk County teachers are available to the teachers at the jail.

Recommendations

- All teachers assigned an intensive reading class should be working toward a certification or endorsement in reading.
- All teachers who are not ESE certified should continue to work toward ESE certification.
- The program should continue to work toward full implementation of the PBIS system.
- The program should rotate teachers as necessary to meet in-field teaching requirements for core academic courses.
- Teachers should receive ongoing in-service training that relates to teaching at-risk students, differentiated instruction and instructional strategies for intensive reading.

9 – Accountability & Evaluation Standards

- Receiving appropriate oversight and assistance by the contract manager that includes conducting and documenting an annual evaluation of the educational program
- Developing and using a school improvement plan (SIP) or strategic plan to assist in providing leadership, direction and accountability
- Maintaining a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Polk County School Board and the Sheriff's Office that includes:
 - the district owns and operates the portable classrooms and the content of instruction
 - all students are provided access to 300 minutes of direct classroom instruction per day as required by law, regardless of classification or status
 - all district staff and contract providers have access to the classrooms and supporting areas, subject to the Sheriff's background screening process
 - The district will address providing appropriate incentives for positive student behavior within the classroom which will not be deemed contraband per facility standards

Findings

Overall the educational program within the jail operates as a bifurcated system. There are teachers, support staff and administrators for the Direct File students and separate teachers, support staff and administrators for the Juvenile students. There is only one teacher who teaches all subjects in the females' classroom. In addition, there are racial tensions between the Direct File staff and Juvenile staff. This division and tension has resulted in duplicated support services such as registration and enrollment and a lack of ability to integrate teaching staff, which would allow teachers to focus more on their areas of expertise rather than teaching all subjects to a limited number of incarcerated students.

Direct oversight from the school district administration has been limited in the past as there is not a principal or assistant principal located on the Sherriff's department complex, which also houses other small juvenile justice programs and schools such as the Polk Halfway House and the Bartow Youth Academy. In addition, the school does not currently have a school improvement plan or strategic plan to define its purpose and help guide its continuous improvement. The administration has used some Title One standards as a compliance check list and some classroom observations have been conducted. However, the results have no variation as each compliance list and observation has received all of the appropriate marks and teachers have always received the highest rating possible in each category. The forms and

process currently used are simply not evaluative/objective in nature and cannot be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of the education program.

Based on observations and a review of documentation the following list of items are currently being implemented. However, as stipulated by the settlement agreement the school district has NOT amended or modified the Memorandum of Understanding with the Sherriff's Office to address the following statements.

- The district owns and operates the portable classrooms and the content of instruction.
- All students are provided access to 300 minutes of direct classroom instruction per day as required by law, regardless of classification or status.
- All district staff and contract providers have access to the classrooms and supporting areas, subject to the Sheriff's background screening process.
- The district will address providing appropriate incentives for positive student behavior within the classroom which will not be deemed contraband per facility standards.

Recommendations

- The program should develop a school improvement plan or strategic plan that addresses the unique conditions and needs of the educational program in the Polk County Central jail. The plan should include goals that target improving the educational services at the jail and address the learning gains of the students. In addition, the plan should address the deficiencies highlighted in this report and include input from staff and students. Progress toward the plans' goals should be measured in relationship to the recommended monitoring.
- The school should conduct its own formal evaluation at least annually and the process and results of the annual evaluation should inform the program's Plan.
- Student performance and outcomes should drive decisions in the program including, but not limited to, pre- and post- reading and math testing gains, credits earned, grade advancement, diplomas and GEDs earned, and rates of return to school post-release.
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the school district and the Sherriff's Office should be revised to address the requirements stipulated in the settlement agreement.
- Due to racial tensions the school district should merge the educational staff from the pre-adjudicated and Direct File classrooms.
- Teachers and educational staff should receive diversity training.
- To ensure consistency and quality in services, the district should consider a different administrative structure for the program that consolidates the leadership and support services for the Juveniles and Direct File youth under one central office.
- The educational program at the jail and other DJJ programs within the Sherriff's complex should be led by an onsite Assistant Principal.
- The program should receive external quality assurance related monitoring and technical assistance for a minimum of two years. The monitoring and technical assistance should include at least three site visits during the first six months and at least quarterly thereafter. Site visits should consist of corrective action development, targeted technical assistance, staff training and focus groups with educational staff to identify and prioritize strategies for implementing the recommendations found in this report.

A photograph of a university campus. In the background, a large brick building with a prominent tower is visible through a dense canopy of green trees. The foreground shows a well-maintained lawn and a paved walkway. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

THE CENTER FOR CRIMINOLOGY
& PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH
AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

• 145 Convocation Way
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-1273

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