

# Virginia

## Juvenile Justice Education

### Case Study Results

**Principal Investigator:**

Thomas G. Blomberg  
Dean and Sheldon L. Messinger Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice

**Prepared by:**

George Pesta  
Research Faculty  
850-414-8355  
gpesta@fsu.edu

William D. Bales  
Faculty  
College of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
wbales@fsu.edu

The Juvenile Justice NCLB Collaboration Project, with financial assistance from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), is committed to conducting research that improves the quality of education services for juvenile justice involved youth. Toward that end, the project has conducted a case study of Virginia and other selected states.

## Virginia Case Study Findings

### I – Purpose

The following report and information was collected through two national surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007, as well as a site visit to the Virginia Department of Correctional Education (DCE) that occurred July 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The purpose of the visit was to: (1) determine the research and data capacity of Virginia to evaluate its own efforts in juvenile justice education, as well as its current capacity to contribute to a National Information Clearinghouse for the field of juvenile justice education, (2) evaluate the current state of juvenile justice education post-NCLB, (3) assess the implementation of NCLB requirements and determine the extent to which NCLB impacted the services and outcomes of Virginia's delinquent population, and (4) determine the impact the Juvenile Justice NCLB Collaboration Project had on Virginia's implementation of NCLB.

Section two of this report describes Virginia's organizational structure in terms of oversight of juvenile justice education, current agency initiatives, and annual reporting. Section three details Virginia's level of NCLB implementation specifically addressing the requirements of highly qualified teachers, transition services, program monitoring and evaluation, and measuring youths' academic gains and community reintegration outcomes. Section four provides a summary of NCLB's impact on Virginia's juvenile justice education services and student outcomes. Finally, Table D-4 provides detailed information regarding Virginia's current data and definitions of measures of youth characteristics, educational services, and student outcomes.

### II – Organizational Structure

Virginia operates a large, decentralized juvenile justice educational system. Virginia is unique in that the educational services are the direct responsibility of Virginia's Department of Correctional Education (DCE). DCE serves youth in publicly operated juvenile residential commitment programs and adults in the state's prison system. However, Virginia is considered decentralized because DCE is not responsible for educational services within 25 locally-operated detention centers. In addition, the state's Department of Education oversees the educational services in one privatized residential juvenile program operated by Associated Marine Institutes (AMI). DCE employs the teachers and directly oversees the administration of education in the rest of the state's juvenile residential commitment programs and adult prisons. DCE is considered a Local Education Agency (LEA) and has a superintendent of schools as well as a school board. DCE is funded through a line-item appropriation from the state legislature. DCE has operated as an independent agency since 1974.

The juvenile justice population consists of youth under the age of 21 who are served in the state's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Virginia defines youthful offenders as youth aged 17 to 21 who have been charged as an adult. Youthful offenders are served in the state's Department of Corrections (DOC). The Department of Correctional Education maintains cooperative agreements with the state's DJJ and DOC.

In FY 2007, the Department of Juvenile Justice had 17,696 detention admissions with an average daily detention population of 1,060. Admissions to juvenile correctional centers totaled 833 with an average daily population of 956. Forty-seven percent of the youth served by the DJJ have been identified as students with disabilities, or special education students. Youth are served in one Reception and Diagnostic Center and eight residential commitment programs. The largest campus houses 250 youth and the smallest is a 40 bed specialized program for students with disabilities. DCE also operates a 105 bed facility for females.

DCE has an annual operating budget of approximately \$60 million and receives federal funding through IDEA, Title 1-Part D, Perkins, Safe Schools, and Title 2. More than half of the appropriated budget is spent on education for adults in the Department of Corrections. In 2005, DCE had 766 positions including 65 central office staff. Each school has a staffing team consisting of a principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, Individual Education Plan (IEP) coordinator, and a transition specialist. All agency staff including teachers are state employees. DCE has 222 school days in the year, with 360 minutes of instruction each day. Virginia state law requires DCE to maintain a maximum of 10:1 student-to-teacher ratio in all of its juvenile justice schools. However, due to a trend of decreasing juvenile commitments in the state, the majority of the state's programs have a lower student-to-teacher ratio.

### **Agency Initiatives**

The Department of Correctional Education embarked on several major initiatives over the last several years. Since the 1990's, DCE focused on replacing the teaching workforce with certified and infield teachers, aligning the curriculum with Virginia public schools, and replacing textbooks and other resources with state adopted materials. The agency also moved to year-round schooling and is working toward providing teacher salaries that are commiserate with public schools in larger, urban school districts. Initiatives at the school and classroom level include administrator training in school leadership, teacher training for teaching in a block schedule, and differentiated instruction.

### **Reporting**

DCE reports to the school board as well as the Secretary of Public Safety who oversees several state agencies including DJJ, DOC, and DCE. DJJ produces an annual report that includes youth demographic information, recidivism results, and fiscal data. DCE reports the state's official education assessment. Testing results are based on end of course exams. DCE has access to the state's DOE student information system for purposes of retrieving student records and reporting student performance while in a DCE school.

The Virginia DOE provides oversight to DCE in the areas of NCLB requirements such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and highly qualified teacher status. DOE approves the agency's school improvement plan, accredits DCE schools, and provides an annual academic review of each school. For details on these measures and for Virginia's most recent findings see Table D-4.

### **III - NCLB Implementation**

#### **Highly Qualified Teachers**

DCE currently employs 440 teachers, 225 of whom teach in the juvenile justice programs and 215 teach in DOC programs. Juvenile programs maintain a student-to-teacher ratio of less than 10:1. In addition, some classrooms in the juvenile programs also have a qualified teacher's aide. Last year, DCE had a 21% teacher turnover rate. Most new hires come from the public school sector; however, some teachers leave DCE for public school positions after attaining their highly qualified status. The agency's most significant shortages of teachers are in the fields of science, math, and special education.

To address teacher recruitment and retention, DCE employs a full-time recruiter who advertises, conducts college recruitment, and develops informational press releases. The agency began recruiting highly qualified teachers in 2005. Retention strategies also include developing equivalent pay scales to public schools throughout the state, offering recruitment bonuses, and conducting a six month interview with new teachers to determine how well they are performing at DCE.

DCE requires teachers and teachers' aides to be highly qualified. The agency uses the state's definition of highly qualified teachers and does not exempt schools from meeting the requirement. From October 2007 to January 2008, 96% of the juvenile justice teachers in DCE were highly qualified in one of the subject areas they taught, while 57% were highly qualified in more than one subject area. Teacher credentials and qualification information is regularly reported to DOE.

#### **Transition Services**

Virginia's DCE provides transition services to support youth in returning to school and/or gaining employment after their release from residential commitment programs. All committed youth first attend the state's Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) for up to 45 days. At the RDC, youth receive a battery of psychological, educational, and career assessments. Prior school transcripts are requested at the RDC and forwarded to the commitment facility. Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are also developed for special education students. Subsequently, youth are then sent to a commitment program designed to meet their treatment and educational needs.

Each program has a fulltime education transition specialist and guidance counselor who assists youth with developing post-release transition plans. Based upon prior school performance and entry assessment results, high school aged youth are placed into a high school diploma program, alternative education program, a General Education Development (GED) program, or a special education program. Career and technical programs are also available to students during commitment.

As of July 1, 2008, DCE employed 63 fulltime instructors and 11 instructional assistants to provide Career and Technical Education programs and services at juvenile facilities.

Program areas include agriculture, business, family and consumer science, marketing, technology, and industrial education. In addition to the trade-specific tasks, juveniles must complete instruction for workplace readiness skills, internet safety, and employability skills. DCE has established apprenticeship programs at several juvenile facilities. The number of programs at each school varies based on available space and the number of juveniles assigned to the facility.

During commitment, a school re-enrollment plan is developed. Thirty days prior to release, letters and transcripts (including career and technical education transcripts and certificates) are sent to receiving public schools. Each public school district in Virginia has a designated re-enrollment coordinator. DCE school counselors work with these individuals throughout the state to transfer records and assist youth in re-enrolling in school upon release from a commitment program. In 2007, DCE school counselors began conducting follow up on a limited number of youth released from residential commitment programs (15 high school seniors). Follow up by transition specialists consists of contacting youths' probation officers at 30 and 180 days post-release. Tracking results are not reported.

### **Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

DCE operates as a Local Education Agency (LEA). DCE's central office conducts program monitoring throughout the year. Monitoring strategies and tools include school improvement planning, academic reviews, and site visits from central office staff as well as teacher visits from curriculum coaches. Each teacher is visited by a curriculum coach approximately four times per year. The central office uses a teacher improvement model for classroom visits by curriculum coaches and administrators. Reviews determine how each program is meeting its school improvement goals through interviews, observations and teacher climate surveys. Principals in each residential facility present quarterly progress reports on school improvement plans to the central office. End-of-course exam data is reviewed as a major part of this process. The agency also conducts quarterly and annual compliance monitoring for special education services.

### **Measuring Youths Academic Gains and Community Reentry**

DCE uses several different methods to measure youths' academic gains while in enrolled in juvenile justice schools. However, there is not a consistent academic performance measure used across all students and academic programs. The agency measures academic performance through student performance on state end-of-course exams, state standards of learning tests, promotion and retention rates, and graduation rates. Students enrolled in the high school program are assessed using end-of-course exams and standards-of-learning benchmark testing. There has been a significant increase in the passing rate of the end-of-course exams in all subjects from 2005-06 to 2007-08. However, only students seeking a standard diploma take these exams. Students in a GED program receive the GED exam as their outcome measure, while students seeking a special diploma receive a state approved alternative assessment.

Other academic testing includes the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Woodcock Johnson III, the GED Official Practice Test, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory. These

exams are given to different populations upon entry and not all students receive a post-test. The agency also records and tracks student progress through credits attempted and earned, grade advancement, and diplomas earned. In 2007-08, DCE awarded 60 standard, modified, and special high school diplomas and 173 GED diplomas. Some programs also offer vocational certifications and career readiness certificates. The agency completes an Annual Performance Report on students who complete career and technical education programs. This evaluation includes the average percentage of program tasks or competencies completed, and the average increase in test scores when comparing the required course pre and post-test scores. Follow up is also conducted on those who complete programs in accordance with the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Act.

Virginia's DJJ generates recidivism results annually. The state uses three measures of recidivism including: rearrest, reconviction, and recommitment. DJJ tracks youth by creating a release cohort and reporting the three recidivism measures at 3, 6, 12, 24, and 36 months post-release. Reconviction of a new class-one misdemeanor or higher is DJJ's official measure of recidivism. Arrest and reconviction data is calculated independently from education data, and comparisons of educational attainment and post-release delinquency outcomes have not been determined. The agency uses juvenile arrest data for varying purposes and reports.

DCE began a process of conducting follow up of youth to determine post-release education performance. Educational transition specialists from the residential programs follow up on youth by contacting juvenile probation officers at 30 and 180 days post-release. Follow up consists of asking officers if youth are currently in school or employed at the time of the follow up. In 2007, the agency conducted follow up on 15 senior high school students who were released from residential commitment programs. Follow up was extended to approximately 250 released youth in 2008. Outcome information is not reported. Most educational data generated by DCE is used for administrative decisions regarding personnel and curriculum. Detailed testing information is regularly shared with teachers for instructional purposes.

#### **IV – NCLB Impact Summary**

Although many of DCE's educational initiatives were under way prior to the implementation of NCLB, the law has assisted the agency in providing an accountability mechanism. Since NCLB, the agency added scientifically-based strategies to their school improvement plan and focused curriculum, instruction, and testing on reading and math. Transition services have become more defined including career planning and communication with public schools for re-enrollment post-release. DCE also requires the use of highly qualified teachers and reports results to the state DOE. NCLB has impacted the quality of instruction through standards of learning, required state testing, and tracking of student progress. Juvenile justice youth enrolled in high school programs are tested every 4.5 weeks on state benchmark assessments and participate in end-of-course exams.

The Juvenile Justice NCLB Project has positively impacted educational services within DCE. As a result of the Project, Virginia made plans to meet with the state of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services to share policies and practices in juvenile justice education.

DCE learned from other states through Project conferences and follow up contact. For example, based on the sharing of information with other states, DCE now uses Title II funds to assist with teacher tuition reimbursement, and is in the process of developing a pre- and post-test system using the TABE.

**Table 1: Data Measures**

Program/School Characteristics
<p><b>Programs</b>                      Juvenile justice youth are served in one Reception and Diagnostic Center and eight residential commitment schools. The largest campus houses 250 youth and the smallest is a 40 bed specialized program for students with disabilities. DJJ operates a 105 bed facility for females. The state has 25 locally operated detention centers and one privately operated residential program that are not overseen by DCE.</p>
<p><b>Education Services</b>                      DCE has 222 school days in the year, with 360 minutes of instruction each day. Virginia state law requires DCE to maintain a maximum 10:1 student-to-teacher ratio in all juvenile justice schools.</p>
Youth Demographics and Characteristics
<p><b>Youth Served</b>                      In FY 2007, the DJJ had 17,696 detention admissions with an average daily population of 1,060. Admissions to juvenile correctional centers totaled 833 with an average daily population of 956.</p>
<p><b>Age Range</b>                      The juvenile population consists of youth under the age of 21 who are served by DJJ. Virginia defines youthful offenders as youth aged 17 to 21 who have been charged as an adult. Youthful offenders are served in the state’s DOC. DCE maintains cooperative agreements with DJJ and DOC.</p>
<p><b>Special Education</b>                      Forty-seven percent of the youth served by DCE have been identified as students with disabilities, or special education students.</p>
<p><b>Length of Stay</b>                      Lengths of stay for juveniles range from 3 to 36 months with an average of 8-9 months.</p>
<p><b>Available Demographic Data</b>                      DJJ’s annual report includes demographic data on youth who are referred, detained, and committed.</p>

<b>Delinquency</b>
<p><b>Current and Prior Offense(s)</b> Detailed offense information for all admissions is reported in the DJJ annual “Data Resource Guide.”</p>
<b>Teacher Characteristics</b>
<p><b>Number and Qualifications</b> In 2007-08, DCE employed 440 teachers, 225 of who taught in the juvenile justice programs and 215 taught in DOC programs. In addition, some classrooms in juvenile programs have a qualified teacher’s aide. DCE has approximately a 21% teacher turnover rate. From October 2007 to January 2008, 96% of the juvenile justice teachers in DCE were highly qualified in one of the subject areas they taught, while 57% were highly qualified in more than one subject area.</p> <p><b>Definition of Qualified</b> DCE requires their teachers and teacher aides to be highly qualified. DCE uses the state’s definition of highly qualified teachers, and does not exempt schools from meeting the requirement. To be highly qualified, DCE teachers must be certified in at least one subject they are teaching and the agency prefers that teachers be certified in more than one subject area.</p> <p><b>Source</b> DCE’s Office of Human Resources maintains this information. Information is reported by site principals.</p> <p><b>Where Reported</b> Teacher qualifications are reported to the Virginia DOE for monitoring.</p>
<b>Diplomas/GEDs</b>
<p><b>Current Findings</b> In 2007-08, DCE awarded 60 standard, modified, and special high school diplomas and 173 GED diplomas.</p> <p><b>Data Source</b> DCE maintains a management information system in which schools report student data.</p> <p><b>Where Reported</b> Diploma results are reported to the superintendent of schools and the school board.</p>
<b>Testing</b>
<p><b>Current Findings</b> DCE has seen a significant increase in the passing rate of the state end-of-course exams in all subjects from 2005-06 to 2007-08. However, only students in the high school program take these exams.</p> <p><b>Definition</b> There is not a consistent academic performance measure used for all students and</p>



academic programs. The agency’s primary measure of academic performance is the state end-of-course exams. Students in a GED program receive the pre-GED and GED exam as the outcome measure, while students seeking a special diploma receive a state-approved alternate assessment.

Other academic testing includes the TABE, the Woodcock Johnson III, the Pre GED exam, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory. These exams are given to different populations upon entry and not all students receive a post-test.

**Data Source**

Official state testing data as well as GED test results are reported through DCE’s management information system (MIS). Other test results such as the TABE are not part of the MIS and are maintained in excel spreadsheets within the central office.

**Where Reported**

State end-of-course exams, standards-of-learning assessment results, and GED exam results are reported to DOE.

**Recidivism**

**Current Findings**

Recidivism rates from DJJ’s 2005 residential commitment release cohort include a twelve month rearrest rate of 49.5%, a reconviction rate of 36.7%, and a reincarceration rate of 25.6%.

**Definition**

DJJ generates recidivism results annually. The state uses three measures of recidivism including rearrest, reconviction, and recommitment. DJJ tracks youth by creating a release cohort and reporting the three recidivism measures at 3, 6, 12, 24, and 36 months post-release. Reconviction of a new class one misdemeanor or higher is the official measure of recidivism.

**Data Source**

DJJ’s management information system.

**Where Reported**

DJJ’s annual “Data Resource Guide.”

**Return to School**

**Current Findings**

In 2007, the agency conducted follow up on 15 senior high school students released from residential commitment programs.

**Definition**

Follow up consists of asking juvenile probation officers if youth are in school at the time of the follow up.

**Data Source**

<p>DCE has recently begun the process of conducting follow up on youth to determine post-release education. Educational transition specialists from the residential programs conduct follow up on youth by contacting juvenile probation officers at 30 and 180 days post-release.</p>
<p><b>Where Reported</b> Not currently reported.</p>
<p>School Performance Post Release</p>
<p><b>Current Findings</b> Follow up does not capture performance in school post release.</p>
<p>Employment</p>
<p><b>Current Findings</b> In 2007, the agency conducted follow up on 15 senior high school students released from residential commitment programs.</p>
<p><b>Definition</b> Follow up consists of asking juvenile probation officers if youth are employed at the time of the follow up.</p>
<p><b>Data Source</b> DCE has begun the process of conducting follow up on youth to determine post-release employment. Educational transition specialists from residential programs follow up on youth by contacting juvenile probation officers at 30 and 180 days post-release.</p>
<p><b>Where Reported</b> Not currently reported.</p>
<p>Employment Performance Post Release</p>
<p><b>Current Findings</b> Follow up does not capture employment performance post release.</p>