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Evaluating Education Within Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs and Juvenile Detention Centers

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Evaluating Education within Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs and Juvenile Detention Centers

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Problem

- Recently released data show that the nation's graduation rate in 2006, 69%, was the lowest it has been since before No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed (Advancement Project, 2009).
- Along with the public school system, Juvenile Detention Centers and Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) in America are struggling to educate kids properly in order to reduce the rate of recidivism and encourage academic success.
- Research has shown a relationship between school performance and delinquency (DuCloux, 2003).

Purpose

- The purpose of this study is to locate the problems and strengths of the educational system within DAEPs, and to define a solution for the increasing recidivism rate of adolescents.

Methodology

- I limited my search to only those articles that were empirically based and from peer reviewed journals. Qualitative, quantitative, and case studies were included in the study.
- Subjects of the studies had to be court-involved or detained youth under the age of 21 and had to be taking part in an alternative education program within their detention center.

How is “Recidivism” Measured?

- Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the re-arrest, reconviction, or return to incarceration with or without a new sentence during a three year period following the incarcerated person's release (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007).

What are DAEPs?

- Abdum-Muhaymin and Yearwood (2007) define alternative learning programs (ALPs) as services for students at risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, or dropping out of school, and they meet the need of individual students.
- Juvenile structured day programs are specific types of ALPs and are designed to offer education to expelled and suspended youth and are sanctioned by the courts.
- Structured day programs offer academic and life skills to the students much like the ALPs and they also offer many more services to the students and their families (Abdum-Muhaymin et al., 2007).



Figure 1: Baltimore's PACT (Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Training) Center helps teens address underlying issues that may lead to their anti-social or deviant behavior.

Footnote 1. Wright, D. 2011. *Program Offers Alternative to Juvenile Detention Teens*. Retrieved April 7, 2012. From <http://www.bet.com/news/national/2011/11/02/program-offers-alternative-to-juvenile-detention-teens.html>.

Findings

- There is overwhelming evidence showing that high levels of literacy are related to a decrease in juvenile delinquency and recidivism (DuCloux, 2003; Zhu et al., 2010; Leone et al., 2005).
- “Literacy is an important prerequisite for intervening in the cycle of delinquent behavior. Research suggests that quality reading programs may help reduce the recidivism rate of incarcerated youth by over 20 percent even when the national recidivism rate for juvenile delinquents is as high as 60 to 84 percent” (Zhu et al., 2010).
- Krezmien, Mulcahy and Leone (2008) conclude in their study that it is imperative for juvenile facilities to incorporate empirically based reading and math remediation programs providing vital information within content areas for students within correctional facilities.

Conclusions

- Findings support previous research that showed increased rates of literacy and mathematic skills decrease criminal behavior.
- Closer relationships between students and teachers create a more consistent educational environment, increasing the success of adolescents outside of these programs, thereby reducing the numbers of juveniles remaining in detention centers.
- Challenging, yet rewarding education can be provided to incarcerated youth as an effort to help them realize that they can excel in school, putting them in a position to make better life choices (DuCloux, 2003).