



# The Florida Senate

Interim Project Report 2006-111

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Committee on Criminal Justice

Senator Stephen R. Wise, Chair

## THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAMMING FOR JUVENILES RESIDING IN DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES

### SUMMARY

Section 1003.52, F.S., governs the delivery of educational services in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs. Under current law, individual school districts are required to provide educational services to these youths throughout the state. During 1998, the Legislature requested several research entities (including the Juvenile Justice Accountability Board [JJAB-which no longer exists], the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program [JJEPP], and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability [OPPAGA]) to study many of the issues involved with building a more responsive, efficient, and accountable delivery system of educational services for youths within the juvenile justice system. The concept of having a separately-funded, centralized agency delivering educational services to youths in juvenile justice facilities, commonly known as the "68th school district," was one of the delivery systems examined. Although successful in several other smaller states or states with smaller juvenile justice populations, this model was not recommended for Florida's juvenile justice system, primarily because of unique characteristics such as the high volume of programs operating within Florida and the fact that most of these programs are privatized.

However, many other reforms were recommended by these entities and became codified into law. These legislative reforms, coupled with the federal requirements under the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* (Title I, Parts A and D) have served as an impetus for substantially improving Florida's delivery of educational services in the juvenile justice system over the last several years. The NCLB legislation directs that juvenile justice schools meet the same high standards that other elementary and secondary public schools in the country must meet. Generally, the NCLB legislation emphasizes improvements in teacher qualifications, adequate yearly progress, program evaluation standards, the implementation of

scientifically based practices, transition services, an emphasis on student's returning to school upon release from a facility, and the development of state education agency plans.

Section 1003.51(5), F.S., requires the DOE to establish and operate a mechanism to provide quality assurance (QA) reviews of all juvenile justice education programs, as well as provide technical assistance and related research to district school boards and providers on how to develop and operate educational programs that go beyond the minimum quality assurance standards. Since 1998, the DOE has administered the JJEPP, a discretionary project which is housed at Florida State University within the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, to assist the department in providing quality educational services to youths in the juvenile justice system. During the review cycle in 2004, JJEPP performed 188 QA reviews on juvenile justice programs including secure detention, prevention, intensive probation, conditional release, and commitment programs. JJEPP also provided technical on-site assistance to 22 educational programs receiving low QA scores.

In addition to monitoring QA standards, s. 1003.52, F.S., requires each school district that provides educational services to youths in a DJJ facility to negotiate a cooperative agreement with the DJJ. Each district is permitted to negotiate an operating contract with a private education provider. These agreements and contracts must be given to the DOE for compliance review before the October FTE Reporting Survey. Based on the reviewed contracts, the DOE found the amount of FTE given to each privately operated program in 2004 was between 90 percent to 100 percent, with a state average of 91 percent (law requires at least 90 percent).

Since 1998, numerous entities have studied how to improve the delivery of educational services to youths

committed to the DJJ. Considerable improvements have been made since the JJAB first reported its comprehensive findings and recommendations to the Legislature in 2000. Many of its recommendations have been mandated by the Legislature and implemented by the DOE, the DJJ, the school boards, educational providers, and DJJ providers. It is clear, however, that more remains to be done.

Accordingly, staff recommends that the OPPAGA conduct a follow-up study to its *1998 Review of Education Services in Juvenile Justice Residential Facilities* (Report No. 98-28) and its *2000 Progress Report on Many Steps Taken to Improve Education at Florida's Juvenile Justice Facilities* (Report No. 99-56), in an effort to provide the Legislature with an updated status report relating to the delivery of educational services in DJJ facilities.

In addition, the Legislature should encourage the formation of a workgroup consisting of representatives from the DOE, DJJ, JJEPP, Workforce Florida, the Florida Juvenile Justice Association, local juvenile justice and education providers, and any other relevant stakeholders to develop a detailed plan of action to present to the Legislature. Many of the recommendations that have been made by the NCLB Committee, the JJAB, the DOE, JJEPP, DJJ, and the informal workgroup of interested stakeholders could be consolidated into a single inclusive action plan to assist the Legislature in determining what needs to be done, how it needs to be accomplished, and the projected time frame for phasing in each suggested change.

The proposed plan should also include specific statutory changes that are needed to successfully implement the federal NCLB requirements and to further strengthen Florida's law providing educational services to youths in the DJJ facilities, particularly in these areas: better delivery of vocational services, better opportunities for juvenile justice youths who have earned a GED to participate in postsecondary education, providing independent living arrangements for specified youths so they can successfully pursue gainful employment and/or higher education opportunities, better transition services, better communication and collaboration among stakeholders, and better incentives for juvenile justice teachers. Continuing to bring about successful educational reforms for youths in the juvenile justice system can best occur when interested stakeholders share the comprehensive blueprint of their vision with each other and the Legislature. Armed with this information, the

Legislature can then make the necessary policy choices ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of additional educational enhancements.

## **BACKGROUND**

The goal of educational services in Florida's juvenile justice facilities is to ensure that all youths transitioning back into their local communities are prepared to return to community, home, school, or work settings as successful, law-abiding, and well-educated citizens. Section 1003.52, F.S., governs the delivery of educational services in the DJJ programs. Under current law, individual school districts are required to provide educational services to these youths throughout the state.

Recently, some senators have expressed concern over the variable quality of educational programming and the quality of teachers assigned to juvenile justice facilities. This project reviewed the quality of programming and alternative delivery systems that could improve educational services to juveniles residing in juvenile justice facilities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Staff examined numerous relevant studies and reports, including quality assurance data and district funding information, compiled legislative history information, attended the Juvenile Justice Education Institute and Southern Conference on Corrections (sponsored by DOE and the JJEPP), met with a workgroup of providers and agency representatives, and interviewed representatives from the DJJ, the DOE, local school districts, private providers, educators, and other interested parties.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Legislative History/Recent State Reforms**

There have been numerous legislative reforms in providing educational programming and services to youths within the juvenile justice system, particularly beginning with the 1999 Legislative Session. During the previous year, the Legislature requested several research entities including the JJAB, the JJEPP, and the OPPAGA, to study many of the issues involved with building a more responsive, efficient, and accountable delivery system of educational services and programs for youths within the juvenile justice system.

The concept of having a separately-funded, centralized agency delivering educational services to youths in

juvenile justice facilities, commonly known as the “68th school district,” was one of the delivery systems examined by the JJAB and JJEPP. Although successful in several other smaller states or states with smaller juvenile justice populations, this model was not embraced by these entities for Florida’s juvenile justice system, primarily because of unique characteristics such as the high volume of programs operating within Florida and the fact that most of these programs are privatized.

What follows, however, are some of the recommendations made by these entities that were put into law to enhance and make more accountable the delivery of educational services within the juvenile justice system without making wholesale structural changes.

*In 1999, HB 349 (ch.99-284, L.O.F.):*

- Designated the DOE as the lead agency for juvenile justice education programs;
- Required the State Board of Education to adopt an administrative rule that included among other things an interagency collaborative process, academic expectations, transition services, procedures for transferring education records, and contract requirements (Rule 6A-6.05281, F.A.C.);
- Required year-round school, waived GED testing fees, developed academic improvement plans for all students; and
- Required the DOE and the DJJ to each designate a coordinator for juvenile justice education programs to provide coordination.

*In 2000, SB 2464 (ch.2000-137, L.O.F.):*

- Required the DJJ and DOE to annually develop and submit to each agency a cooperative agreement for the enhancement of juvenile justice educational services;
- Required the DJJ and DOE to consult with the statewide Workforce Development Youth Council in jointly developing a multi-agency plan for vocational education (the DOE and DJJ issued a state plan in May 2001);
- Required youths who have not received a high school diploma or the equivalent to participate in vocational/technical education if they are not employed while in a DJJ program (contingent upon funding);
- Required educational services for minors in adult county jails;
- Allowed full-time teachers working in juvenile justice schools to participate in the critical teacher shortage reimbursement program; and

- Required the DOE to conduct a funding study to determine the precise funding level necessary to provide special education services in DJJ facilities (the DOE issued a report in February 2001), and a facility study to determine the adequacy of educational space within each juvenile justice facility (the DOE issued a report in November 2000.)

*In 2004, HB 1989 (ch. 2004-333, L.O.F.):*

- Increased the percentage from 80% to 90% of Florida Education Finance Funding (FEFP) generated by students in DJJ programs which must be spent on instructional costs for these students;
- Provided the GED Exit Portion to DJJ students;
- Required the DOE, with the help of the school districts, to develop and select a uniform student assessment instrument and protocol for measuring learning gains;
- Provided DJJ students access to Florida Virtual School courses;
- Provided that juvenile justice teachers are eligible for all teacher recruitment and retention programs;
- Required the DOE and DJJ to consult with additional entities (Workforce Florida, Inc. and community colleges) and to include additional information (description of funding and transfer of credits) when developing the multi-agency plan for career and technical education and required it to be reviewed annually (the DOE and DJJ are currently updating the 2001 state plan); and
- Required a workgroup to provide strategies for meeting the requirements under the federal *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* legislation and rewarding programs showing positive student outcomes (workgroup issued a report in February 2005).

#### **Federal Legislation / “No Child Left Behind”**

The state legislative reforms mentioned above, along with the requirements under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (Title I, Parts A and D) have served as an impetus for improving Florida’s delivery of educational services and programming in the juvenile justice system over the last several years. The NCLB legislation directs that juvenile justice schools meet the same high standards that other elementary and secondary public schools in the country must meet.

Generally, the NCLB legislation emphasizes improvements in teacher qualifications, adequate yearly progress, program evaluation standards, the implementation of scientifically based practices, transition services, an emphasis on student’s returning

to school upon release from a facility, and the development of state education agency plans.

According to Florida's Juvenile Justice NCLB Committee in its 2005 report (*No Child Left Behind in Juvenile Justice Education Report to the Legislature*, p. 2), there are 46 school districts in Florida that provide educational services to juvenile justice programs located within these districts. A snapshot of these programs indicates the following:

- Florida has 196 juvenile justice education programs: 25 detention centers, 44 day treatment programs, and 127 residential programs;
- 45% of these serve a maximum of 45 students;
- 43% of these have a capacity range of 48 to 100 students;
- 12% of these serve more than a 100 students;
- Students are committed to programs ranging from low, moderate, high, or maximum security levels;
- Moderate risk programs make up 66% of the residential facilities and handle the majority of committed youths; and
- Lengths of stay in residential programs can be anywhere from 30 to 1,095 days.

The disparity in the lengths of stay, types and size of programs, the educational levels and special needs of the youths within the juvenile justice commitment programs, the highly mobile nature of this population, and the large number of programs that do not have the same students for an academic year makes it very challenging to meet the federal NCLB requirements, according to the NCLB Committee.

In its report to the Florida Legislature, the Juvenile Justice NCLB Committee (comprised of representatives from the DOE, DJJ, along with school districts, juvenile justice education providers, and the Florida Juvenile Justice Association) identified key issues in implementing and complying with the requirements under NCLB and also made recommendations for addressing these issues to better serve youths receiving educational services within the juvenile justice system. The DOE then responded to the Committee's recommendations in the report.

What follows are highlights of these recommendations and the DOE responses from the Committee's 2005 *No Child Left Behind in Juvenile Justice Education Report to the Legislature* (p.13-17.)

*Adequate yearly progress:*

- Ensure accurate reporting of juvenile justice students by directing the DOE to develop an effective reporting verification system;
- Provide juvenile justice schools an opportunity to verify reporting data; and
- Encourage timely data submission by facilitating collaboration between juvenile justice education programs and local school districts.
- *Response by the DOE*—Including accurate reporting of juvenile justice students is a significant indicator for school district contract management in the 2005 JJEP QA review standards.

*Highly Qualified Teachers:*

- Implement a retention plan for experienced teachers hired after 2006 that allows for professional development hours in juvenile justice education, allows private provider juvenile justice teachers to participate in the Florida retirement system and to have a 12 month contract with incentives, and classifies the DJJ as a critical teacher shortage area with these funds earmarked for DJJ teachers; and
- Modify the High, Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (an alternative method to teacher certification or subject testing) for non-experienced teachers hired after June 30, 2006, (when the federal requirement for highly qualified teachers becomes effective) to allow a certified, highly qualified teacher to supervise other teachers; use the juvenile justice education common assessment for measuring student academic gains (instead of FCAT); and give DJJ teachers two years from their hire date to be deemed a "highly qualified teacher."
- *Response by the DOE*—Including private provider juvenile justice teachers in the Florida retirement system would require legislative action, but the department will consider suggesting a statutory change to classify the DJJ as a critical shortage area.

*State and Local Educational Agency Plans:*

- Add issues unique to juvenile justice programs to the state educational plan; and
- Allocate Title 1, Part D funds generated by juvenile justice education programs directly to these programs through the local educational agency.
- *Response by the DOE*—Allocating these federal funds is the responsibility of the local school districts.

*Program Evaluation:*

- Extend to ten school days the time frame for administering an entry assessment;
- Develop methods to measure and report individual student outcome measures;
- Develop methods and measurement plans addressing indicators of high school completion and employment as well as post-secondary education and training (like One Stop Centers for youths completing a juvenile justice program);
- Identify a transition contact in each district to assist in accurately transferring credits; and
- Use the common entry/exit assessment to measure juvenile justice student achievement.
- *Response by the DOE*—Plans to implement the federal program evaluation requirement in consultation with JJEEP, supports the ten day time frame assessment extension, and supports efforts to provide any additional information not already being given through the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program about post-secondary outcomes for Florida students.

*Transition:*

- Designate a transition specialist in each school district to facilitate a DJJ youth's transition back into the school and community;
- Include educational records in a youth's commitment packet;
- Base school placement recommendations for released juvenile justice youths on a risk assessment and academic progress and require the school district to justify why a youth is not allowed back into a recommended school placement;
- Provide funding of vocational and post-secondary education programs for youths who have earned their GED/high school diploma and remain in juvenile justice facilities; and
- Provide funding to support transition/aftercare programs, including conditional release programs.
- *Response by the DOE*—Supports the recommendation that educational records be part of the youth's commitment packet, supports efforts to communicate to school districts about a DJJ youth's academic progress and risk threat assessment (but states that this is primarily a DJJ responsibility), has requested each school district designate a transition contact to assist with a DJJ youth's transition, and will address the funding recommendations in the annual multiagency plan for career education.

*Small Juvenile Justice Education:*

- Apply dropout prevention rule (Rule 6A-6.0521(7)(i), FAC) for teachers who are certified in ESE (which allows any certification appropriate for dropout prevention teachers).
- *Response by the DOE*—Has issued technical assistance about requirements for dropout prevention teachers to meet highly qualified teacher status.

*Rewarding High Performing Programs:*

- Develop a formula and process for rewarding high performing juvenile justice education programs.
- *Response by the DOE*—Supports developing a formula and process for rewarding high performing juvenile justice education programs.

**Profile of Students in Juvenile Justice Programs**

According to a 2005 report by the DOE (*Developing Effective Educational Programs in Department of Juvenile Justice Programs-Year 2003-2004*, p. 9), school districts provided educational services to 46,334 students in juvenile justice facilities in the 2003-04 school year. Of these students:

- 74% were male (48% black, 37% white, 15% other);
- 26% were female (42% black, 46% white, 12% other);
- 72% were enrolled in 8-10th grades (9th grade consisting of 54%);
- 70% were overage for grade placement (strong correlation with dropping out of high school), compared to 53% of all dropout prevention students and 21% of the general student population. Of the overage juvenile justice education students, 61% who were eligible to graduate did graduate;
- 96% of those not eligible to graduate remained in school at the end of the school year and 66% were promoted to the next grade;
- 40% were eligible for Exceptional Special Education (of those, 39% were specific learning disabled, 31% emotionally handicapped, 15% severely emotionally disturbed, 8% educable mentally handicapped, 1% gifted, and the remaining 6% representing other disability areas), compared to 15% in the total PK-12 student population;
- 97% of those taking the General Educational Development (GED) Tests passed; and
- 3.8% of juvenile justice education students in 9-12th grades dropped out of school, compared to 3.1% of all students in 9-12th grades.

### **Education Quality Assurance Reviews**

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services within the DOE administers the educational programs for students in juvenile justice programs around the state. Section 1003.51(5), F.S., requires the DOE to establish and operate a mechanism to provide quality assurance (QA) reviews of all juvenile justice education programs, as well as provide technical assistance and related research to district school boards and providers on how to develop and operate educational programs that go beyond the minimum quality assurance standards.

Since 1998, the DOE has administered the JJEEP, a discretionary project which is housed at Florida State University within the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, to assist the department in providing quality educational services to youths in the juvenile justice system. JJEEP assists the DOE as follows: conducts QA reviews of the educational programs in Florida's juvenile justice facilities; provides technical assistance that will improve educational programs; conducts research that identifies promising educational practices and validates best practices; and provides policy suggestions to the DOE for helping youths successfully transition back into their community, work, or school.

According to the JJEEP in its 2004 report to the DOE (*Executive Summary of the 2004 Annual Report to the Florida Department of Education, p. 3*), the percentage of teachers with professional teaching certificates who were teaching in juvenile justice programs from 2000 to 2004 went from 64 percent to 85 percent. Research conducted by JJEEP also found that higher academic achievement by youths while committed to DJJ programs result in more likelihood that these youths will return to school after commitment. Moreover, if they receive their high school diploma while committed, they are less likely to get arrested again within 12 months of release (unlike the youths who did not get their diplomas or return to school). Similarly, youths who stay in public school for one year after being released from a commitment program are 41 percent less likely to be arrested again.

The QA review process conducted by JJEEP evaluates juvenile justice education programs in the areas of transition, service delivery, educational resources, and contract management. During the review cycle in 2004, JJEEP performed 188 QA reviews on juvenile justice programs including secure detention, prevention, intensive probation, conditional release, and commitment programs, according to the 2005 report by

the DOE (*Developing Effective Educational Programs in Department of Juvenile Justice Programs-Year 2003-2004, p.17*). JJEEP also provided technical on-site assistance to 22 educational programs receiving low QA scores.

Some of the results from the 2004 QA reviews are as follows:

- 13 or 7% of programs scored in the superior performance range (overall mean 7.00-9.00);
- 45 or 24% of programs scored in the high satisfactory range (overall mean 6.00-6.99);
- 67 or 36% of programs scored in the satisfactory range (overall mean 5.00-5.99);
- 5 or 24% of programs scored in the marginal satisfactory range (overall mean 4.00-4.99);
- 17 or 9% of programs scored in the below satisfactory performance range (overall mean 1.00-3.99);
- 1 or 1% of the programs scored in the below satisfactory range (overall mean 1.00-0.99);
- State averages for overall scores (5.33%), service delivery scores (5.79) and educational resources scores (5.58) landed in the middle of the satisfactory performance range, while the overall transition standard landed in the marginal satisfactory range (4.68);
- The service delivery area had the highest average rating (5.79), with educational resources following closely behind (5.58);
- The 2004 overall mean scores (5.33) and scores for each of the standards declined slightly from 2003 (5.65), primarily because of the continued implementation of more stringent requirements under the federal NCLB legislation (namely, new requirements for reading, FCAT participation, and highly qualified teachers);
- District-operated programs (103) scored higher than district-contracted programs (85) on each of the four standards and on the overall mean score (5.55 versus 5.07 respectively);
- The 2004 overall mean score for commitment programs reviewed (122) was 5.26;
- Thirteen programs with superior overall scores are supervised by the following school districts: Bay (2), Collier (1), Escambia (2), Hillsborough (1), Orange (1), Pasco (1), Pinellas (1), Polk (1), St. John's (1), and Washington (2);
- Twenty-five school districts have one or more programs in the high satisfactory range (one less than in 2003);
- Ten of the high satisfactory programs are detention centers, 19 are moderate-risk programs, 3 are high-risk programs, 3 are low-risk programs, 6 are

prevention programs, 2 are intensive probation/conditional release programs, 2 are mixed commitment programs; and

- In 2004, 46 programs in 28 school districts were required to develop and implement corrective action plans to correct noncompliance issues in the areas of student planning, exit transition, and teacher qualifications.

### **Cooperative Agreements/Educational Service Contracts/Funding**

Section 1003.52, F.S., requires each school district that provides educational services to youths in a DJJ facility to negotiate a cooperative agreement with the DJJ. Each district is permitted to negotiate an operating contract with a private education provider. These agreements and contracts must be given to the DOE for compliance review before the October FTE Reporting Survey. According to the DOE, all school districts sent in their respective cooperative agreements, with most of them adequately addressing requirements related to roles and responsibilities, administrative issues, classroom management, attendance, dispute resolution, curriculum, and instructional delivery.

In addition, 67 school districts sent in contracts negotiated between themselves and private providers so the DOE could review them as well. The DOE states that most contracts met required standards. The most difficult requirements to meet according to the DOE included pre-contract negotiations, student assessments, and developing and implementing individual academic plans.

Based on the reviewed contracts, the DOE found the amount of FTE given to each privately operated program was between 90 percent to 100 percent, with a state average of 91 percent. (*Id.* at p.4) Further, “according to the Cost and Base Funding for Juvenile Justice Programs, the state total for percent of funding expended for 2002-2003 was 115.11 percent of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and categorical funding or revenue. School districts reported that in 2003-2004 school year, the costs were 116.65% of the FEFP and categorical revenue.” (*Id.* at p. 3)

### **Interested Stakeholders Workgroup**

An informal workgroup of interested stakeholders (representing the DOE, the DJJ, JJEEP, the Florida Juvenile Justice Association, school districts, private educational providers, and private juvenile justice providers) met during the 2005 Juvenile Justice Education Institute and Southern Conference on

Corrections to discuss strategies for improving the delivery of educational services to youths committed to the DJJ, with particular emphasis on vocational programming. Particular emphasis was put on vocational education services because there was a consensus that vocational education programming in the DJJ facilities is an area that needs to be strengthened. The workgroup met again as a follow-up to the conference to suggest recommendations for implementing these improvements.

During the discussions, the concept of the 68th school district as a delivery system was brought up, but it was not pursued as a viable alternative to Florida’s current educational delivery system based upon the previous research conducted by the JJAB and JJEEP. Instead, workgroup participants suggested reviewing and implementing many of the unimplemented recommendations previously made by the JJAB in 2000, as well as advocating some new ideas. What follows are numerous suggestions by this workgroup for improving Florida’s educational delivery system for juvenile justice students, particularly in the area of vocational education:

- Create several regional pilot vocational centers statewide (in north, central, and south Florida) to deliver vocational education services to committed youths, with active involvement with the Workforce boards and One Stop Shops to assist youths with employment;
- Direct the DOE and the DJJ to facilitate business community involvement with vocational programming, apprenticeships, and work experience programs that will result in employment after a youth is released from commitment;
- Look into incentives for business involvement such as tax breaks, bonding, and limitations on liability;
- Direct the DJJ to match a committed youth to a facility that can meet his vocational needs based on his age, academic ability, interests, high school credits earned, and career plans;
- Direct the DJJ to develop specialized vocational programs when this option is feasible based on the number of youths and other available resources;
- Require the DOE and the DJJ to develop a plan for improving the engagement of business and industry in the design, delivery, and evaluation of vocational programming in commitment programs and aftercare. The DOE and DJJ should also include the Florida Workforce Development Youth Council’s input into its report to the Legislature;
- Designate youths in juvenile justice commitment facilities and in aftercare as a priority population

for the Florida Youth Workforce Council and regional youth workforce councils;

- Include a representative designated by the local juvenile justice board on the Florida Youth Workforce Council;
- Require Workforce Florida, Inc., the DJJ, the DOE, and the Florida Juvenile Justice Association to meet and make recommendations for working together to better serve DJJ youths;
- Create a specifically designated fund for the DOE to bolster the FEFP and bring vocational programming to a uniform standard in the juvenile justice system;
- Authorize the DJJ to add appropriations designated for aftercare services to local workforce investment funds in an effort to create comprehensive and follow-up services to ensure that youths transitioning from commitment will get and keep jobs, further their education, and obtain job training; and
- Authorize youths in commitment facilities who earn a GED to continue to participate in vocational programming financed with funding generated under the FEFP for K-12.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Over the last several years, numerous entities have studied how to improve the delivery of educational services to youths committed to the DJJ, as evidenced by the Findings Section of this report. Considerable improvements have been made since the JJAB first reported its comprehensive findings and recommendations to the Legislature in 2000. Many of its recommendations have been mandated by the Legislature and implemented by the DOE, the DJJ, the school boards, educational providers, and DJJ providers. Similarly, the Legislature has begun gearing up so that the agencies and entities affected by the federal NCLB requirements are ready to meet that challenge, thereby ensuring additional improvement to Florida's educational services delivery system for juvenile justice youths, particularly in the areas of transition and retaining highly qualified teachers.

It is clear, however, by these same comprehensive findings and unimplemented recommendations of the JJEEP, the JJAB, the NCLB Committee, the DOE, the DJJ, and the interested stakeholders workgroup that more remains to be done, particularly in the following areas: providing better vocational educational programming and successful entry into the job market; providing an opportunity for juvenile justice youths who have received a high school diploma or GED to

participate in postsecondary education; providing better transition services for youths released from a juvenile justice facility trying to reenter school or get a job; providing incentives for qualified teachers to teach in juvenile justice facilities; providing independent living arrangements for specified youths so they can successfully pursue gainful employment and/or higher education opportunities; and requiring more communication and collaboration on a state level among the DOE, DJJ, Workforce Florida, Inc., and on the local level with school districts, juvenile justice providers, workforce boards, and educational service providers.

Accordingly, staff recommends that the OPPAGA conduct a follow-up study to its *1998 Review of Education Services in Juvenile Justice Residential Facilities* (Report No. 98-28) and its *2000 Progress Report on Many Steps Taken to Improve Education at Florida's Juvenile Justice Facilities* (Report No. 99-56), in an effort to provide the Legislature with an updated status report relating to the delivery of educational services in juvenile justice facilities.

In addition, the Legislature should encourage the formation of a workgroup consisting of representatives from the DOE, DJJ, JJEEP, Workforce Florida, the Florida Juvenile Justice Association, local juvenile justice and education providers, and any other relevant stakeholders to develop a detailed plan of action to present to the Legislature. The proposed plan should include specific statutory changes that are needed to successfully implement the federal NCLB requirements and to further strengthen Florida's delivery of educational services to youths in juvenile justice facilities, particularly in the areas mentioned above.

Many of the recommendations by the NCLB Committee, the JJAB, the DOE, JJEEP, DJJ, and the informal stakeholders workgroup could also be consolidated into the single inclusive action plan to assist the Legislature in determining what needs to be done, how it needs to be accomplished, and the projected time frame for phasing in each of the suggested changes. Continuing to bring about successful educational reforms for youths in the juvenile justice system can best occur when interested stakeholders share the comprehensive blueprint of their vision with each other and the Legislature. The Legislature, equipped with this information, can then make the necessary policy choices ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of additional educational enhancements.