

The FJJA Workgroup appreciates the opportunity to provide input towards legislation that will improve educational services and outcomes for DJJ involved youth. Below, we offer perspective on valuable aspects of the bill and our concerns for unintended consequences. We hope to continue our work together to develop legislative language that will positively impact the lives of Florida's at risk youth.

Positive:

- Applaud raising the focus on this historically neglected population.
- Agree that education and transition are critical factors to the success of youth in DJJ education programs as reflected in the models currently being delivered across the continuum of DJJ.
- Wholeheartedly agree that DJJ, DOE, and Workforce Development should be partnering to ensure that youth in DJJ educational programs receive a high quality education.
- Applaud the goal of an accountability system for DJJ educational programs. Since last session, the local school boards and DJJ educational providers in collaboration with DOE have been working on an Accountability Report Card and a School Improvement Plan to focus on transition and career education.

Concerns:

The FJJA Education workgroup has been actively working in anticipation of legislation moving forward juvenile justice education reform. While the proposed is a good start, it would be difficult to support in its current form. We have identified our primary concerns and are prepared to offer solutions upon request.

Organizational Structure:

- Have concerns that DJJ will be unable to provide educational oversight:
 - Expertise and infrastructure currently does not exist within the Department to support:
 - rulemaking,
 - data collection/reporting,
 - contracting
 - Making DJJ the lead agency will require infrastructure that would duplicate what is already in place through DOE and the local school districts.
- The bill adds two additional administrative agencies to provide oversight to a DJJ juvenile justice educational facility which typically, are smaller in size than most current local public schools. This appears to increase administrative bureaucracy at a time when agencies are being mandated to operate more efficiently.

Educational Services:

- In regards to career and technical services, the bill only impacts approximately 25% of all youth in the juvenile justice education system.
- The current focus of the bill centers around educational services in DJJ residential programming which comprises approximately one-third of the overall DJJ population served requiring educational services (as example: it excludes day treatment).
- Industry Certification:
 - Current bill would eliminate all certifications not currently listed on Industry Certification Funding list (HBI as an example).
 - Industry Certification Funding List does not currently match up with the student demographic population of youth in juvenile justice education programs.
 - Industry Certification requires third party testing which results in funding implications.
- The bill relies heavily on the delivery of virtual education. Currently state virtual education requirements do not provide for flexibility of when a youth can be enrolled which is in conflict with rolling admissions of youth in juvenile justice educational programs. Florida Virtual Education does not take into account a recurring need for remediation. There are also no provisions for contracting with a third party for delivery of virtual education in Florida.
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- The proposed expectation to change requirements for teacher availability on evening and weekends as a minimum threshold would require solutions to the following:
 - Teachers under contract with a local school district.
 - Increasing qualified personnel to deliver additional educational and CTE services resulting in additional funding needs.
 - Direct implications to day treatment programs.
 - Students receiving credit with no additional funding provided.

Accountability:

FJJA is in support of accountability measures, however, we find the proposed performance measures do not take into account the complexity of the juvenile justice population.

- Juvenile justice education programs being held accountable post release.
- Middle school measures are not appropriate for actual student age (11 – 14) and ability level.
- Currently doesn't address applicable outcomes with multiple learning disabilities (approximately 43% compared to 15% in public school), remediation needs (example: 70% in need of intensive reading based on FCAT). Average length of stay in residential programs is six months.
- The quality of current state outcome data has been inconsistent.
- Missing language for technical assistance or school improvement mechanism for low performing schools which is conflict with existing education improvement model.
- Teacher Certification requirements proposed are a lowering of standards.

Funding Implications:

- The bill is not revenue neutral. Some examples:
 - Virtual education
 - Post-secondary education
 - Transition
 - Industry Recognized certification
- Implementation of this bill has funding implications which would need to be addressed in appropriations.

Proposed Solutions:

As part of the work of the FJJA Education Workgroup, high level solutions have been identified. While this is a work in progress, listed below are areas of consensus among private providers.

Organizational Structure:

- Create a strong state level Cooperative Agreement between DJJ, DOE, and Workforce Development to address language increasing the role of each of entities involvement in the delivery of juvenile justice education.
 - Accountability
 - Technical assistance for low performing juvenile justice education programs
 - Funding streams

Educational Services:

- Approved career and technical educational programs will need to address the entire student population including age, ability level, disability status as well as lengths of stay. Due to the constraints, OCP's should be considered as an appropriate outcome. Based on this criteria, an implementation plan must be integrated and allow for flexibility. To assist in this, we recommend a review of national career and technical industry certification programs. (Examples could include: programs underneath the Department of Labor like: Job Corps & YouthBuild).
- Recommend that the bill consistently addresses the continuum of education services throughout the juvenile justice system.
- Create a juvenile justice and alternative education portal that has open entry/exit course offerings. This portal would also include remediation and credit recovery options.

- Teacher availability to work evenings and weekends continue to remain an option for “flexible scheduling to meet the needs of students” at juvenile justice education locations. It should be noted that if this recommendation moves forward that while substantive legislation this language will have a fiscal impact that will need to be addressed.

Accountability:

- The performance measures under the accountability system should address all the students served in juvenile justice education system.
- Accountability system should include technical assistance and school improvement mechanisms that focus on low performing schools.
- Recommend local school districts and contracted providers continue to work with DOE to further refine for implementation an accountability system that addresses varying program models, lengths of stay, and ages & abilities of youth.
 - There is currently a new School Improvement Plan for juvenile justice education programs that was implemented this year.
 - There is a Juvenile Justice Education Program Accountability Profile document in process for implementation.
- Academic teachers need to be certified but certification can be out of field.

Funding Implications:

- 95% of all state education funds should be allocated directly to contracted education providers.
- 90% of all Federal dollars generated by neglected and delinquent’s students in juvenile justice education programs must be spent within those same programs.
- Day treatment programs shall receive discretionary local effort dollars. Residential programs should receive residential supplemental equivalent to discretionary local effort dollars.
- Juvenile justice education providers shall receive all ESE dollars generated by the students and not rely on matrix scores to determine the allocations.
- Estimated that approximately 5% of youth enter juvenile justice education programs with a GED or a high school diploma and are in need of a career/technical and/or post-secondary funding stream to address the educational needs of these youth.