Educating Juvenile Detainees: The Goals of a Connecticut Facility

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Research Question

What are the goals at the Primer Facility (pseudonym) for these juveniles and how are these goals implemented and reflected throughout the curriculum and the classroom?
Significance

- It has been noted that many youth who are detained in juvenile correction facilities are below a fourth grade reading level, which makes them functionally illiterate (Giuliotti).

- Incarcerated youth are provided with minimum services and there is a “lack of attention to [their] educational rights” (EDJJ).
Significance (cont.)

- Not much research on the many programs used by facilities with incarcerated youth
- The numbers of juvenile detainees are growing
- If this curriculum works for this population, it should be utilized in other facilities as well
This Connecticut facility aims for the children to be educated and have a smooth transition not only into their community, but their school systems as well. This is implemented throughout the classrooms, the environments that the teachers provide for these boys and the literacy program the school utilizes.
Methods

- Only one facility in Connecticut
- All boys from the ages of 12-18
- Grades 6-12
- Interviews
  - Deputy Commissioner of DCF
  - 2 teachers
  - principal
- Class observations
  - English, Math, World Cultures, Computer Education
Findings:

- Interview with the Principal, Ms. Ward
  - “remediate areas that are deficient, to provide structure in a strong educational environment, and give them opportunities for credits that will transfer to use towards graduation
  - Facility: deals with the whole child, to help them become “productive citizens”
Findings:

- Mr. Smith, Math teacher
  - Relates the math to the students
  - Work together as a class

- Mrs. Chantel, English teacher
  - Does not want to know why the children are in this facility- doesn’t want to judge or discriminate
  - Believes these boys are not bad or criminals, but because of their environment they were brought up in, they weren’t given much hope
Findings:

- **PLATO**
  - Since Oct. 27, 2004 every student at this school has been assessed with PLATO
  - Have a minimum of 90 minutes per week
  - Helps promote literacy in reading, language arts and math
  - Addresses skill levels from 2 to 14 grades
  - Finds learning gaps and tries to decrease them
Conclusions:

- This facility has many strong aspects to it
- The students have improved their literacy rates
- Teachers and faculty really enjoy this population and want to work hard to have the kids succeed
Conclusions

- “these kids are the biggest examples of social problems in Connecticut— they have been at risk all their lives— many of their own family members have been incarcerated, the odds are just against them”

- “Most [of the students], I would say, are well behind academically but have the ability to succeed if given the opportunity and the motivation to do so.”