

# Education for Youth in State Care

Access to a quality education can transform a young person's life." (National Youth Employment Coalition, 2005) Those who graduate are more prepared to transition to post secondary education or the work force. (Atkins, Bullis, Yovanoff, 2007) Students who graduate are more likely to contribute to society, both socially and financially, and less likely to drain society via Medicaid or prison costs. (Vision 2015)

Research shows the lack of a high school credential negatively impacts the life of a young person and those around him. The bureau of labor statistics paints the dismal picture that awaits those who fail to complete high school. "Unemployment rates for youth not in school are highest for those without a high school diploma--27.7 percent for young men and 31.4 percent for young women." (<http://www.bls.gov>) "Between October 2009 and October 2010, 340,000 young people dropped out of high school. The jobless rate for recent high school dropouts was 42.7 percent, compared with 33.4 percent for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college." (<http://www.bls.gov>) Further, racial and ethnic disparity also exists. "Black youth not enrolled in school had an unemployment rate of 30.0 percent in October 2010, higher than the rates for their white (16.2 percent), Asian (20.8 percent), and Hispanic (20.8 percent) counterparts." (<http://www.bls.gov>) The impact on the rest of society is evident in the fact "...nearly all young adults had held at least one job since leaving high school, although high school dropouts, were less likely ever to have held a job than were young adults with more education." (<http://www.bls.gov>)

## Youth in state care

- Return multiple times
- Have significant gaps in learning
- Are reluctant learners
- Are significantly behind in credits
- Do not know how to catch up
- Are less likely to graduate
- May cost society up to \$41,000 in Medicaid costs
- May cost society up to \$25,000 in prison costs

▪ Vision 2015 Executive Summary

Education attainment is critical for an effective transition to adult living. Today, young people demonstrate a basic level of education by achieving the high school diploma. By earning the correct numbers of credits in designated courses, youths are granted a diploma and the opportunity to enroll in post secondary education, job training, the military or enter the work force. Without the diploma, the future will most assuredly be bleak.

I believe you will agree that academic achievement will increase successful transitions to future educational opportunities, employment, and the community and decrease the likelihood of recidivating back into the state's child welfare, juvenile justice or social service systems.

For children served by the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, (DSCYF), obtaining an adequate education is a challenge. Children within the state system are vulnerable to frequent moves, changes in school districts, broken relationships and mistrust. They are so focused on the daily needs of life with little physical stamina left to sustain attention to what is to be learned. This is evident by the low test scores on required accountability testing. Some researchers have determined that these youths can be up to eleven times more likely not to complete high school. (Brownell, Roos, MacWilliam, Leaf, Valdez, 2008)

## 1300 freshman and sophomores

- 0 algebra I credits earned
- 0 geometry credits earned
- 0 algebra II credits earned
- 0 credits in biology or chemistry earned
- 0 credits in world languages earned

These are all required for a high school diploma



Approximately 2,000 “enrollments” occur across the states 12 residential or day treatment programs. During the 2010-2011 academic year, 983 of these students were placed in the system multiple times, 414 of these students remained for 90 days or more each time they were enrolled. As such, they miss extended periods of time with the common curriculum.

Even though these youths attend educational programs while placed in state care, much attention is paid to filling the gaps with knowledge evident in assessment testing. Many of these youths are reluctant learners in that they have experienced little success, have not developed adequate relationships in schools, are frequently absent, truant or suspended and are known for their behavior problems. (Meeker, Edmonson, Fisher, 2009) Given the immediate situations facing these youths little attention to the time of the school year when considering placements.

When these students are of high school age, they experience greater disadvantage. The frequent placements, absences, suspensions and failures make completing high school nearly impossible. Completing the necessary credits is untenable. On any given day, 70% of students attending state agency educational programs are high school age. During any school year, approximately 1300 enrollments, or 66% of the total program population, occur for students who are considered either freshman or sophomores. This is because they have no credit, or too few credits, to advance from year to year. Several studies indicate, English, math and science credits are indicative of the youths chances of completing high school.

Research has shown that the inability to achieve high school credits within the typical time frames is a contributing factor to leaving school prior to completing the high school requirements. (Meeker, Edmonson, Fisher, 2008, Neild, Stoner-Eby, Furstenberg, 2008, Brownell et. al. 2010) Most of the students in DCSYF have school crises long before reaching high school yet virtually all students upon interview state they want to finish school. Most do not know how. These students have little understanding of credits required, courses required, or how to negotiate a typical school setting. (Neild et al. 2008)

- “Unemployment rates for youth not in school are highest for those without a high school diploma. The jobless rate for recent high school dropouts is 42.7%”
- Those who obtain a GED without vocational training fare no better economically than high school dropouts.

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

# Quality High School Education is a Right

For those served by the public school  
system ...

And those served by the Children's  
Department

No one solution will solve the academic needs of all these young people, however, diligently attending to the freshman and sophomore credit attainment while youth are in state care, will advance the likelihood of graduation.

Alternative instructional methods which incorporate interest and enjoyment helps young people remain in school. (Hope, 2006) For disenfranchised youth, carefully crafted academics which incorporates multiple intelligences and personal success deepens commitment to learning. Providing authentic, experiential opportunities leads to greater learning develops greater academic and social competency. (Hope, 2006). Empowering students to participate in personal goal development and achieve short term goals enables them to become independent learners. Incorporating these suggestions into standards based, state sanctioned credit bearing courses will increase numbers of courses completed. (Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan, Leone, 2009) Adding career exploration courses combined with a comprehensive career oriented project not only increases the likelihood of high school completion, they provide a foundation for youth to more adequately enter the workforce. (Moody, Kruse, Nagel, Conlon, 2008) Adding technology to this mix enables the departments programs to offer credit recovery, credit acceleration and provides for a wider variety of course selections.

## Increasing academic achievement and outcomes...

- Increases students' skill level, self perception, and opens doors
- Increases successful transitions; returning youth on grade level
- Increases communications among schools and agencies
- Opens the way to provide a continuum of school options for our neediest youth

The state had foresight to identify the role of education for these youths as the responsibility of DSCYF. In doing so, it provided qualified teachers with an adequate number of positions and resources. Overtime the education unit has realigned position to maximize it use of staff and resources. Collaborative efforts are needed to help these youths succeed, to share records in a timely manner and to assist in tracking youth after they leave state care. For those within DSCYF, it means a commitment to support the education of these young people. While we all agree that it is not education that brings the child to the attention of DSCYF; it is educational achievement and success that has the potential of keeping the child, and future offspring, from needing the attention of this department.

Accountability and demanding educational requirements for this department creates some resistance internally. While all frontline staff will readily agree for the need of these new demands, the arduous task of implementing this change, may lead some to silent resistance or a constant state of confusion regarding schedules. These emotional responses are predictable when accountability is increased, particularly for those who may believe they are already doing an adequate job. Being prepared with well constructed lessons for a constantly changing student body, overcoming students' initial resistance and adhering to a rigorous schedule, is hard work. It takes all of us to work together and support each other.

## High School Graduation

- Changes lives.
  - The life of a young person
  - His family
  - His community
  - Society in general

Given what we know about these youths combined with what the research tells us and the obvious advantages to the youth and society, the education programs housed within DSCYF provide credit bearing high school classes that allow for higher level math, sciences, and career exploration. These courses meet the standards as outlined by state and local educational agencies. DSCYF education unit created a credit policy based on competency that incorporates credit recovery, credit acceleration, and embedded credits. Our current aim is to pay particular attention to the diligent and purposeful tracking of freshman and sophomore credit attainment. This allows for more effective transitions to more conventional and community based education. I anticipate an increased use of web based curriculum in order to meet the varied curriculum needs, interests, and abilities of youth in state care. Finally, I would love to discuss with school districts and community school options ways to allow these youth to continue with their education until they reach the goal of a high school diploma.

## Increasing the pathways for youth to obtain credits and a means to a high school diploma

- Is good for the student
- Is good for the agency
- Is good for the state
- Is good for society



This collaborative work also includes creative utilization of community resources and services to help youth successfully achieve high school graduation and post secondary options.

I invite all of you to support the efforts of the DSCYF education unit in reaching our vision of excellent education for every student every day! In line with Delaware Vision 2015, we will reach this goal when we are able to say that we achieved the commission set out by federal regulations, No Child Left behind and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. We will prove that even those educated in state agencies are proficient in the general curriculum and able to complete high school; college and career ready! The success we will experience will not only be good for youth, our communities, and our society, the success we achieve will also be good for our staff and our organizations!

## *Education and Transition in the life course of delinquents*

- Academic achievement predicts the future avoidance of delinquency for incarcerated youth who return to school when released
- Youth who return to school and attend school regularly after release are significantly less likely to be rearrested within 12-24 months
  - College of Criminology and Criminal Justice; Florida State University Research Brief

For those involved in the juvenile justice system it is important to remember, academic achievement is key in reducing recidivism. Education is cited as one of the most critical factors in reducing recidivism and successfully transitioning to the community. (Atkins, Bullis, Yovanoff, 2007, Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan, Leone, 2009, Hagner, Malloy, Mazzone, Cormier, 2008, Moody, Kruse, Nagel, Conlon, 2008,)

## Rehabilitation through Education

- Teacher quality has an enormous impact on learning, achievement and ultimately recidivism
- Academic and vocational programs are instrumental in reducing recidivism by as much as 30%
- \$1,000,000 spent on correctional education prevents about 600 crimes while that same money invested in incarceration alone prevents only 350 crimes

▪ MTC Institute, Data Spotlight, July 2005

Factors impacting positive outcomes include teacher quality. All teacher in DSCYF are certified in content, and or special education. In fact, research demonstrates educators working in juvenile justice systems tend to be more qualified “credentialed” than those working in public schools. (Gagnon, J., Barber, B., Van Loan, C., & Leone, P.. (2009).

## There are things we can do...

- Alternative instructional methods which incorporate interest and enjoyment helps young people stay in school

Hope, 2006

- Students respond to meaningful tasks.

Allison Zmuda 2010

- Your brain releases extra dopamine when an experience is enjoyable. Dopamine and feeling good helps you learn.

Judy Willis, MD 2009

Academics tied to vocational skills further increases the likelihood of success. Resources directed toward education provide increased outcomes. Hope (2006) identifies the push toward academic achievement, as measured by tests scores, as a cause toward youth disaffection with schools. Hope's (2006) longitudinal, qualitative study cites personal success and enjoyment as two necessary factors for school achievement. He maintained that students can succeed when multiple intelligences, as espoused by Howard, Gardner and others, are balanced with academic mastery.

## DSCYF Special Schools' vision statement



# Excellent Education for Every Student Every day

Through

- Student centered curriculum
- Best practices in instructional strategies
- Accountability through assessment and monitoring

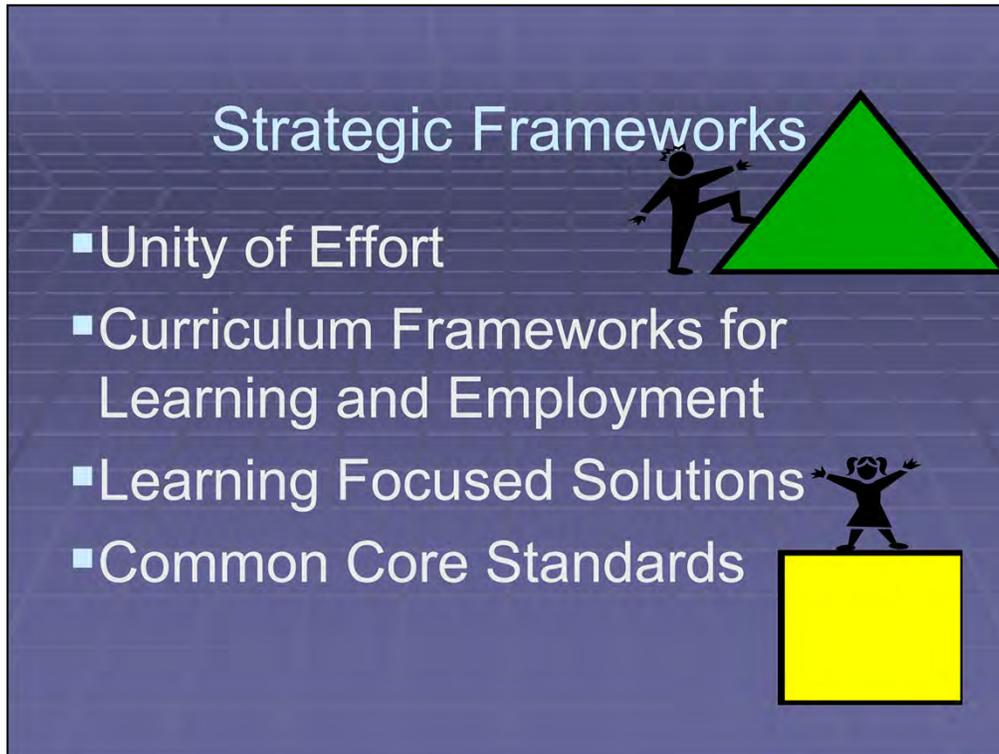
## How...



- Lead through example
- Ensure optimal use of resources
- Provide daily accountability
- Use instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of youth
- Engage youth through meaningful learning experiences
- Provide feedback for learning
- Monitor student growth
- Partner with host facilities

## Strategic Frameworks

- Unity of Effort
- Curriculum Frameworks for Learning and Employment
- Learning Focused Solutions
- Common Core Standards



Unity of effort is the way we do business. We concentrate of teachers' performance and delivery of instruction so they can focus on student learning and achievement. All energies, resources and fit our vision statement. Curriculum Frameworks for learning and employment is the process we developed to ensure all students are getting what they need; a personal learning plan. We use student records, interviews, assessments, interests and goal setting. Learning focused solutions provide research based instructional strategies to ensure even the most vulnerable learners are learning. Common Core standards keep us focused on the skills students need to be successful in life.

# Everything Works Together

## Unity of Effort

Paying attention to the instructional core; teacher, content, student expectations

## Teaching to the Common Core Standards

## Educational Technology

Computer aided instruction and content



Utilization of resources

Use of data

## Learning Focused Solutions and Strategies

Meaningful content and high expectations

## Curriculum Frameworks for Learning and Employment

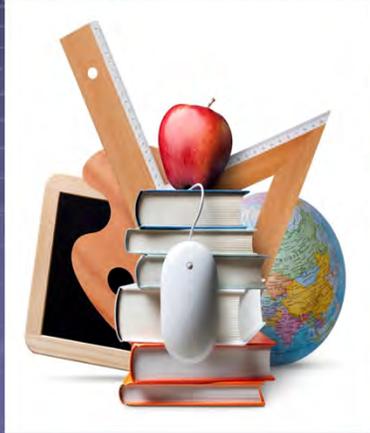
There are no quick fixes in education. All frameworks and strategies need to work together to achieve success for student learning and successful transition. Structured learning activities that include vocational education or career related learning will greatly increase the likelihood of positive transitions to the community, increase chances of graduating from high school, and increases the ability to enter the labor market. (Gagnon et al. 2009, Moody et al. 2008) To be successful, transitions to the community and further education must meet the needs of the youth and be planned collaboratively to address the inconsistent community factors. (Atkins et al. 2007, Hagner et al. 2008)

## Groupings, Classes and Choices

- Credit recovery, acceleration or remediation
- Career Pathways
- Partnering with home school
- Internships
- Return to conventional school
- Seek high school credential through James H. Groves Adult Education (GED or Diploma Tract)
- Employment
- Higher education

So what kinds of things do we do to increase academic achievement and credit attainment.....Personalize learning opportunities to meet the needs of the individual, ensure experiential components and culminating activities that engage the brain and force generalization and application of learning. Collaborate with home school, family, and host facility. Require student and optimally family participation in goal setting. Educate students on their options, purposefully teach the steps to succeed. Teach students to manage their weaknesses through their strengths. Finally teach students how to advocate for themselves. Teach the tools to do so through by incorporating these skills into the curriculum.

## Academic opportunities



- Increased access to grade level and remedial curriculum
  - Nova NET
  - AZTEC
  - Skills Tutor
  - White list
  - DAAL curriculum
- Increased access to technology

The curriculum developed for youth in correctional and behavioral health settings needs to address individual needs while also addressing rigorous demands and vocational opportunities. (Gagnon et al. 2009, Hagner et al. 2008, Moody et al. 2008.)

## Vocational Skills/ Options

- Community Connections employment specialist
- Access Points (partnership with DOL)
- Moving on to college (Partnership with DTCC)
- Construction (Partnership with DE Skills Center, Habitat for Humanity)
- C-Tech (Communications and Fiber Optics)



## MORE OPTIONS

- Internship (Partnership with DGI and Public Allies)
- IC3 (Nationally certified computer course leading to internship or employment)
- Young at Art (Homegrown art business gaining national attention)



## Where we have been...

- Transition Results
  - 2007; 31% of students in DSCYF successfully maintain transition through 90 days
  - 2008; 32% maintain transition at 90 days
  - 2009; 37% maintain transition at 90 days

How does all of this work, let the data speak for itself...

Our results across all sites

- **After implementing**
  - **Curriculum Frameworks for Learning and Employment**
  - **Unity of Effort**
  - **Learning Focused Strategies**
  - **Common Core Standards**

....

- **2010: 59% of DSCYF Education Unit students successfully maintain transition at 90 days**
- **2011: 69% maintain transition at 90 days**



While educating youth deemed at risk or disaffected may be an arduous task, doing so provides positive outcomes for the students, the communities in which they live and their families for generations to come. (Atkins et al. 2007, Brownell et al. 2010, Gagnon et al. 2009, Hagner et al. 2008, Hope, 2007, Meeker et al., 2008, Moody et al. 2008, Neild et al. 2008)

Visit DSCYF Special Schools at....

<http://dscyfeducation.wikispaces.com/>

**Where we serve "Excellent  
Education for Every Student, Every  
Day!"**

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