
Juvenile Structured Day and Alternative Learning Programs: Impact and Process Study

Introduction

At-risk and troubled students have been described as discouraged learners. These youth do not succeed in the standard high school program for a variety of reasons—typically poor attendance, habitual truancy, falling behind academically, teenage parenthood, and/or a lack of adequate school support. Realizing the economic impact of the high school dropout problem, many states, communities, and school districts established separate educational situations for at-risk and troubled students including Alternative Learning Programs (ALPs) and Juvenile Structure Day Programs (JSDPs). ALPs and JSDPs serve the broad spectrum of at-risk and troubled students, including suspended and expelled students, those at risk of dropping out, and those already processed through the juvenile justice system.

ALPs are programs that are designed to offer a variety of different learning possibilities to students who have not been successful in the traditional classroom setting, and JSDPs are designed to offer programs to expelled and suspended youth and who are sanctioned by the courts. There are 215 ALPs and approximately 24 JSDPs in North Carolina to date. While the number of these programs has grown nationwide, little is known about their impacts.

The University of North Carolina's Center for Urban & Regional Studies conducted an eighteen-month study of eleven JSDPs and ALPs for the Governor's Crime Commission. The Commission sponsored this study to learn more about the impact of JSDPs/ALPs on at-risk youth, their families, and communities, and to better understand the institutional and programmatic characteristics of these programs. In order to examine the processes and outcomes associated with JSDPs/ALPs, the research team reviewed existing documentation on selected ALPs/JSDPs, and conducted primary data collection to evaluate the impact of JSDPs, in particular, upon youth participants.

The study results show that JSDPs can be effective, community-based interventions that redirect youth away from further contact with the juvenile justice system and toward productive citizenship. This article provides an initial look into the effective practices that these programs have engaged, the actual outcomes that have been achieved, and policy recommendations for consideration.

Effective Practices

The following practices, which are being implemented in North Carolina Juvenile Structure Day Programs, have been found to be effective in helping youth achieve positive outcomes in the areas of school, family, and staying out of further contact with the juvenile justice system.

Behavior Management

- Behavior management, job one! In many programs youth were provided clear expectations about behavioral guidelines, developed individual plans for meeting these expectations, and received ongoing support through constructive feedback.
 - A high level of supervision helps to prevent behavioral problems both in and out of the program and is partially responsible for the low overall recidivism rate.
 - Certified NC Juvenile Services Officers directly supervising juveniles at all times, including arrival, departure, lunch and restroom breaks.
 - Individualize behavioral management with a set of rewards and motivators that are tailored to the specific youngster.
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Expanded and Broad-Based Service Provision

- Extended-day programs benefit juveniles by reducing idle time, providing meaningful learning and therapeutic experiences.
- Multi-modal service provision increases opportunities for youth. This may include standard academic programming and supplemental tutoring, behavior management, anger management, conflict resolution, substance abuse prevention education, violence prevention education, school counseling, cognitive-behavioral therapy, individual and group mental health counseling, recreation, enrichment activities, parental involvement, life/social skills, character education and computer literacy education.
- Collaborations with community partners make expanded services available on-site during the regular program day.
- Follow up and after care with youth once they leave the program provides support and continuity.

Parent Involvement

- Parent involvement is essential in providing consistency in programmatic efforts while the youth is at the JSDP and when they are at home.
- Holding regular (monthly) parent meetings offer instruction in parenting court-involved juveniles and emphasize the necessity of parental involvement and responsibility.
- Referring parents/families experiencing chronic problems to free in-home family counseling either through mental health or another connected agency.
- The provision of parenting training and support groups is beneficial.

Opportunities for Success

- Hands-on programming, such as programs in carpentry, gardening and culinary arts, broaden the experiences of young people and provide them opportunities outside of the academic classroom to develop their skills.

- An important component of hands-on training is that it is therapeutic in the sense of building the youth's self esteem and locus of control, both associated with academic achievement.
- Internship programs provide real opportunities for youth who may not be able to continue on to college.

Building Support and Governance

- Support and involvement from the local school system is instrumental in getting a program off the ground.
- An active advisory committee that regularly meets to conduct focused planning and evaluation provides a link to the broader community of local stakeholders and improves the program.
- Advisory committees lend credibility to a program and provide links between programs and policy-makers.

These effective practices highlight the importance of the following: Effective collaboration; developing a behavioral management system that does not cause constant power struggles between staff and youth; involving a wide range of interpersonal development opportunities for the youth; using creative programmatic components to achieve multiple goals that includes the youth's family and larger community; and effective partnering with service providers that are able to supplement programmatic offerings. One JCPC consultant stated, "These should not be considered altogether new. We need to build upon and organize the services that are already available in the larger community." In many ways the JSDPs highlighted in this study have acknowledged this and employed the services of multiple stakeholders, yet, these JSDPs do offer something new. They are places where youth can obtain the focused attention that they need.

Outcomes

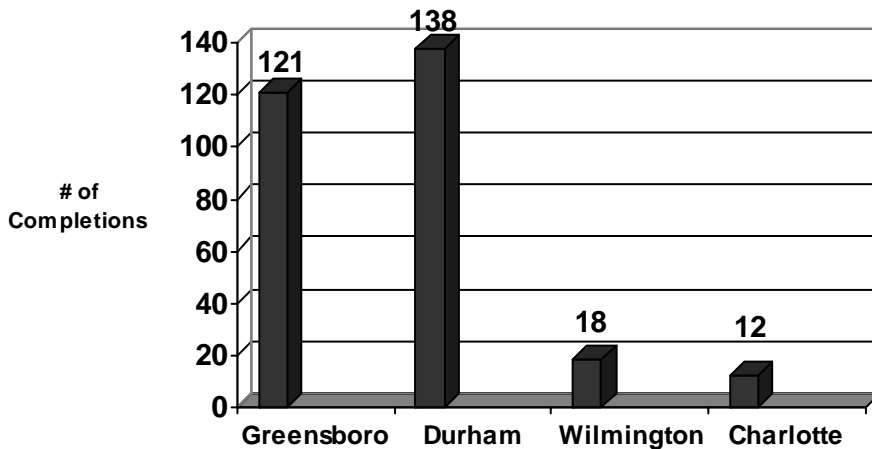
The study finds that Juvenile Structure Day Programs can fill an important gap in providing community-based services to adjudicated youth as well as youth at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Multiple programs successfully steered youth away from continued involvement in the

juvenile justice system, and demonstrated moderate levels of success in assisting youths in achieving behavioral as well as educational goals. Interview data collected from all of the sites in the study show that many of the programs are in the “emergent” or early phase of development. Below are some indicators from the four intensive case study sites that support the idea that Juvenile Structure Day Programs hold promise. These sites were chosen because they represent some of the most challenging urban environments to operate these types of programs. The four intensive case study sites were Durham, Charlotte, Greensboro, and Wilmington. Altogether 624 youth were served between 2000-2004.

Program Completion

Overall, 46% (n = 289) of the youth in the four intensive case study sites completed their program requirements. Figure 1 displays the number of youth completing program requirements for each intensive case study site. The Greensboro and Durham sites, which displayed a more “nurturing” approach to behavior management (i.e. intensive counseling and family involvement), had 70% (n = 259) of their participants complete program requirements. In contrast, the Charlotte and Wilmington sites, which displayed a more “authoritative” approach to behavior management (i.e. regular disciplinary procedures such as physical restraints for non-compliance), had only 12% (n = 30) of its participants complete program requirements.

Figure 1 Youth Completing Program Requirements at Each Intensive Case Study Site



New Contact with Juvenile Justice System

The results of the intensive case study sites revealed a 20% to 52% reduction in the number of program participants experiencing subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system. Overall, 188 of the 624 participants in the four programs did not have subsequent contact with the juvenile courts. As illustrated in Figure 2, a significant number of these youth (n = 92) were from the Greensboro program. Conversely, the higher number of youth that had new contact with the juvenile justice system (n = 352) came from the Durham, Wilmington and Charlotte programs.

Figure 3 (page 5) represents the number of terminated program participants who were admitted to either a Youth Development Center (YDC) or other “escalated” setting in the juvenile justice system. One of the more impressive results to note is the fact that only four of the 119 commitments to YDCs or other escalated settings came from the two more successful programs (Greensboro and Durham) as opposed to 115 of the 119 commitments coming from the less than successful programs (Wilmington and Charlotte).

Figure 2 Number of Program Participants Experiencing No Subsequent Contact with the Juvenile Justice System by Program Site

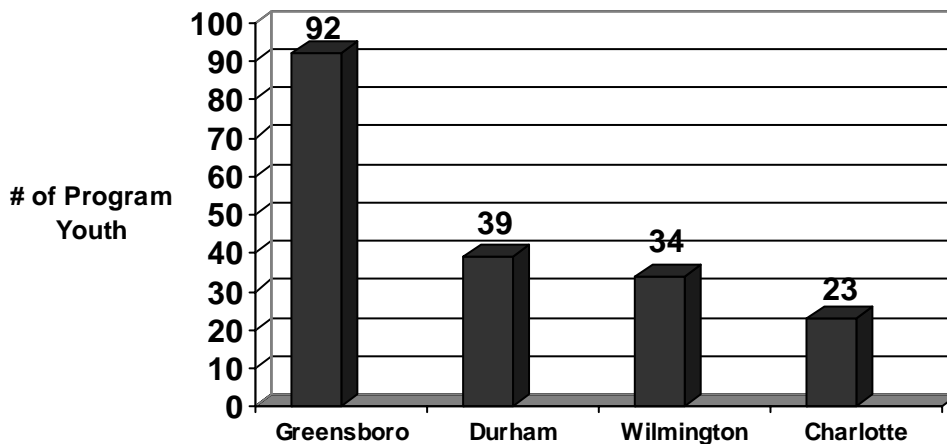
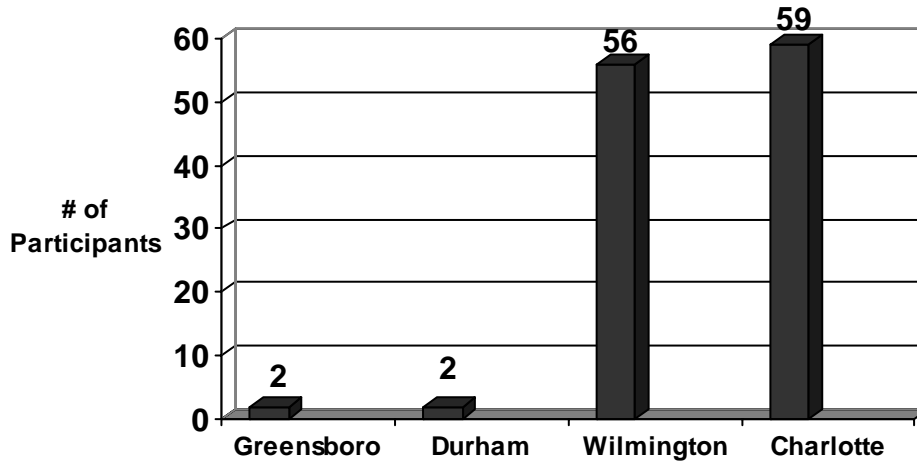


Figure 3 Number of Terminated Program Participants Admitted To YDCs or Other Escalated Settings



Family and School Related Problems

According to the results of the intensive case study sites, 290 youth from these programs experienced a decrease in reported family problems. In addition, 274 of the participants experienced a reduction in school related problems upon termination from the program. Specifically, youth in the Greensboro and Durham programs experienced reductions in school-related problems by 75% and 51% respectively.

Cost Benefits

An important factor one should consider regarding the value of JSDPs in providing continued education for suspended and expelled youth is the potential cost savings. The results of this study revealed that the average cost per youth in both the Greensboro

and Durham programs was \$4,344. Thus, from 2000 to 2004 (time period the study covers) the costs for both the Greensboro and Durham programs were \$1.2M and \$407,788 respectively. This equates to a total cost of \$1.6 million for a five-year program period.

The estimated annual cost for committing a youth to a YDC, according to the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) in 2004 was \$50,000. Among the 259 students who completed both programs (Greensboro and Durham) successfully, 255 were not committed to a YDC during the five-year study period, which would have cost the state approximately \$12.7M (259 youth x \$50,000 annual cost per YDC admission). Consequently, the cost for JSDPs represents a small fraction of the funds required for more intensive placements such as YDCs and other forms of residential treatment.

Lessons Learned & Policy Recommendations

When analyzing the data from multiple stakeholders internal and external to the JSDPs and pairing this information with measures of success, the following lessons are highlighted.

- JSDPs require more long-term and stable funding from the State of North Carolina in order for staff to be able to focus on service delivery and not fund raising. Even in the most effective programs, a great deal of staff effort continues to be directed toward securing funds in order to keep the doors open. According to many stakeholders, there simply needs to be a more substantial commitment from the state to sustain these efforts.
- Programs report that the development of a strong community collaborative is essential to the planning, maintenance, and growth of a JSDP. Many stakeholders recommend advisory boards, comprised of local juvenile justice officials, school, and non-profit service providers, parents, and even youth who have successfully matriculated in order to provide the political will to assure program effectiveness. These groups can also assist program directors in problem solving in a collaborative manner, thus strengthening links between all parties, which are critical to the success of JSDPs.
- Information sharing is critical for program success, and virtually every program that participated in the study has developed effective practices in the areas of behavior management, family involvement, multi-modal service delivery, the creation of tailored curriculum for short versus long-term program stays, interpersonal development opportunities, creative education-employment internships and job training efforts, as well as a broad spectrum of activities geared at linking youth to networks of people and services who will assist them in achieving their academic goals.

For more information, including a copy of the full report and the two-day training session manual, please contact Michael Wilson, Juvenile Justice Specialist, at (919) 733-4564 or michael.wilson@ncmail.net.

This research was conducted by Dr. Jim Fraser, Senior Research Associate, at the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (www.nc.edu/curs/htm).

Effective Practice Highlight: Case Management

Individual case managers are available throughout the day to provide counseling as needed by students. Some students seek out contact on their own, whereas with others the case manager has to ask the student to come to their office for a visit. Students who are eligible for mental health services can receive individual counseling through the area mental health program. From July 2004 through June 2006, all *A New Day* staff will undergo training in two forms of therapy, “Relational Healing” and “Peer Governance.” The training will cover group and family counseling and will be provided by Bethesda Family Services in Milton, Pennsylvania. This training will assure that the entire *A New Day* staff is unified in a science-based approach.

Effective Practice Highlight: Family Involvement

We refer parents/families experiencing chronic problems to free in-home family counseling either through mental health or an agency funded through JCPC for this purpose. The senior case managers are in continuous contact with parents regarding their child’s progress. Parents attend regular service plan and team conferences with our staff. The first two years of our program we provided parenting training and support groups. The purpose of some sessions was to create an atmosphere that was enjoyable and relaxing with music, art projects, discussion, and food. During the past two years, the alternative school we are located in offered Parent Nights with a banquet and speakers. Parents are too busy to do both Parenting Nights and the parent/family training sessions.

-Program Staff Member 2004

Quotes above from the **Juvenile Structured Day and Alternative Learning Programs** report which can be found at <http://www.ncgcd.org>.

Juvenile Structured Day and Alternative Learning Programs: Impact and Process Study

Prior SystemStats and reports include:

Basic Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Service Provision: A Statewide Statistical Profile

Gangs in North Carolina - A Comparative Analysis Between 1999 and 2004 (SystemStats)

Recruitment and Retention of Telecommunications Officers (SystemStats)

Recruitment and Retention of Sworn Sheriffs' Personnel (SystemStats)

Methamphetamine Fact Sheet (SystemStats)

Evaluating North Carolina's Statewide Automated Victim Assistance and Notification (SAVAN) System

Recruitment and Retention of Detention Facility Personnel (SystemStats)

Technology on Patrol: An Evaluation of Mobile Data Computers in Law Enforcement Vehicles (SystemStats)

Recruitment and Retention of Sworn Police Personnel (SystemStats)

CyberCrime Study

Juvenile Structured Day Programs for Suspended and Expelled Youth: A Statewide Assessment

Effective Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelters: Strengthening Services for Children

Geographic Information Systems for Small and Medium Law Enforcement Jurisdictions (SystemStats)

Dispositional Outcomes of Domestic Violence Ex-Parte and Domestic Violence Protective Orders (SystemStats)

Domestic Violence Shelters and Minorities

Domestic Violence: Dispositional Outcomes of Protective Orders in the Courts

A Process and Impact Evaluation of the North Carolina Communities that Care Initiative

Geographic Information Systems for Small and Medium Law Enforcement Jurisdictions: Strategies and Effective Practices

Perceptions of Crimes Affecting North Carolina's Latino Residents: Results from a Qualitative Crime Prevention Needs Assessment (SystemStats)

National and State School Crime Trends (SystemStats)

Disproportionate Minority Overrepresentation in the Juvenile Justice System

Law Enforcement Tools for Latino Communities

North Carolina Citizens' Perceptions of Crime and Victimization (SystemStats)

Juvenile Day Treatment Centers - Strategies and Effective Practices

Law Enforcement Domestic Violence Units: Handbooks

Some of these reports can also be found on the Governor's Crime Commission website below:

<http://www.ncgcd.org>

Juvenile Structured Day and Alternative Learning Programs: Impact and Process Study

Analysis Center's areas of current study:

Recruitment and Retention of Public Safety
Personnel

Electronic Crime

Grant Sustainability

Hispanic/Latino Youth Gangs

Methamphetamines in North Carolina



SYSTEMSTATS

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<p>The Governor's Crime Commission was established in 1977 by the North Carolina General Assembly under G.S. 143B-479. Its primary duty is "to be the chief advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety for the development and implementation of criminal justice policy." The Crime Commission is always open to comments and suggestions from the general public as well as criminal justice officials. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts and feelings on the information contained in this publication or on any other criminal justice issue of concern to you.</p>			
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