

# **“READIN’, ‘RITIN’ AND ‘RITHMETIC” IN LOCKUP**

## **A CRITICAL LOOK AT EDUCATION IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

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### **SUMMARY**

Education is the backbone of our society. The greater the academic achievement the greater the likelihood of success.

Unfortunately, many young people do not have the opportunity to excel. There are a variety of reasons which contribute to the failure of our youth including disinterested or disenfranchised parents, lack of discipline and structure, peer pressure, substance abuse, as well as school administrators and teachers who sometimes lose sight of their mission. Regardless of the reasons, too many young people find themselves involved in the Juvenile Justice System.

The 2000–2001 Orange County Grand Jury conducted an in-depth study of the education provided in Juvenile Institutions and Youth and Family Resource Centers (YFRC). The Grand Jury found that many of the problems have existed for too many years. These problems have been reported by previous Grand Juries and Juvenile Justice Commissions, yet they still exist and cry out for remedies.

This report highlights a number of problems, organizational and operational and provides specific recommendations that should improve the institutional system and enhance the provision of education. Major recommendations include:

- Complete, with highest priority, the accreditation process of the Orange County Department of Education’s (OCDE) Alternative Education Program to bring the County in line with Juvenile Court Schools in many other county jurisdictions.
- Organize and administer Institutional/YFRC Schools as a separate unit in the OCDE Alternative Education Program, with a mission statement and strategic plan specific to its purpose. This should include dedicated Principal Administrative Regions.
- Increase emphasis on rehabilitation by improving collaboration of education and probation personnel, staff development training for teachers, expansion of school libraries and enhanced transition services.

The Grand Jury is pleased to note that there has been significant positive movement to improve the educational process since the study began in the fall of

2000. There are dedicated administrative and teaching staff who are providing quality education in a difficult environment.

If society is really serious about the rehabilitation and preparation of youth for assimilation into the mainstream of our communities, these recommendations should be given highest priority. The future of our youth and our society is at stake.

## **PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION**

Quality education is a top priority for our nation, state, and local communities. Education is a key ingredient for success of all juveniles including those within the Orange County Juvenile Court School system. Often these juveniles have met with educational failure prior to their designation as Wards of the Court. They lack educational skills, motivation, self-discipline and self-esteem. These youths will eventually be mainstreamed into our society. Success of this rehabilitation process depends heavily on the quality of the educational component. The staff at these facilities face an immense challenge.

The purpose of this Grand Jury study was to evaluate the Orange County Department of Education's role in providing quality education to minors at Juvenile Court Schools and, more specifically, the Institutional/YFRC schools. The study focused on five key areas:

- Organization and Administration
- Internal Communication
- Staff Development
- Institutional/YFRC School Libraries
- Transition Process

## **HISTORY/BACKGROUND**

The Orange County Department of Education administers the Alternative, Charter, and Correctional Education Schools and Services (ACCESS) program in the County for those students who are not attending classes within the regular public school districts. Juvenile Court Schools are part of the ACCESS Program. As shown in the table below, the Grand Jury focused on the seven juvenile institutional school sites where minors are detained and the five Youth and Family Resource Centers (YFRC) where minors are on probation. The Grand Jury visited each of the Institutional/YFRC sites and met with administrators, teachers and probation personnel. Following the initial meetings, questionnaires were prepared on observed issues. Based on questionnaire responses, follow-up interviews were conducted.

## Orange County Juvenile Institutional/YFRC Sites

Site	Description	School	Students
Juvenile Hall	Primary center for intake and detention of juvenile offenders	Otto Fisher	470
Juvenile Hall Annex	Houses high security risk males	Otto Fisher	40
Santa Ana Jail (Juvenile Section)	Houses high security risk males	Summit	64
Central Men's Jail (Juvenile Section)	Houses male minors tried as adults	Summit	17
Youth Guidance Center	Boys and girls detention center	Rio Contiguo	125
Los Piños Conservation Camp	Older boys vocational and forestry program	Los Piños	125
Joplin Youth Center	Younger boys rehabilitation program	Joplin	64
Youth & Family Resource Centers(5)	Collaborative 8% Solution and Challenge Programs for boys & girls on probation	Pathways	150

The 8% Solution Program is an early intervention program that focuses on minors age 15 or younger when entering the Juvenile Justice System if they have three or more profile factors placing them at great risk of becoming chronic offenders. These factors are: significant family problems, significant problems at school, a pattern of drug and/or alcohol use and delinquent peers or criminal patterns. The Program not only focuses on high-risk youth, but extends to the minor's family. Minors who are on probation are picked up each morning by Probation counselors and returned home after a full day of education and rehabilitative services. Non-compliance or lack of cooperation can result in a probation violation, subsequent court action and possible detention at Juvenile Hall. This much-expanded multidisciplinary team approach is more costly than other rehabilitation programs because public and private service providers are included in the Program.

The Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) is the collaborative, multidisciplinary response to the 8% Solution Program managed by the Orange County Probation Department. All-inclusive services consist of probation, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, education, transition programming, employment and family counseling at each YFRC site. There are currently five, soon to be six, sites in the County.

While evaluation continues through 2001, preliminary results of the 8% Solution Program are promising. According to the Orange County Probation Department, the Program youth are committing fewer and less serious crimes than their non-program counterparts. Rates of alcohol and drug abuse one year after entering the Program dropped by more than half. Petition filings for probation violations

and new crimes after one year were reduced by 31%, and days spent in custody were reduced by 26% on average when compared to the control group.

The 8% Challenge Program is a partially state-funded program for older youth which is directed toward vocational guidance, work experience and skill development to help them live on their own. Evaluation of this more recent Program is in progress.

## **Organization and Administration**

The Orange County Department of Education is the legislatively mandated provider of juvenile court school education. Juvenile Court Schools, and specifically the Institutional/YFRC schools, are scattered throughout the entire Alternative, Charter, and Correctional Education Schools and Services (ACCESS) program, which includes more than 80 sites Countywide. ACCESS is divided into ten instructionally related Principal Administrative Regions (PAR) for administrative purposes. The rationale for this PAR organization is both geographical and functional. In some cases, the principal of the PAR supervises both Juvenile Court Schools and Community Day schools. The schools within each PAR operate with a great deal of autonomy.

The Grand Jury believes that Institutional/YFRC schools are unique enough to benefit significantly from being organized functionally, with dedicated management and administration, customized mission statement, goals, objectives and strategic plan, and their own PARs. This reorganization should accomplish the following:

- Recognize the critical role of education in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders.
- Recognize the unique challenge to effectively teach groups of different ages with a wide range of academic proficiencies and learning styles during relatively short detention periods.
- Recognize the need for educators to collaborate closely with probation staff in a team approach to ensure security and safety, correct behavioral problems, advance educational skills and develop vocational skills.

One of the major complaints revealed by questionnaire responses and personal interviews was the unavailability of the PAR principals because their area of responsibility and span of control was too extensive. Some principals have overseen as many as nine schools and could not be present at an institutional school on a regular basis. In addition, principals are required to participate in countless administrative meetings. It was also noted that principals were changed or moved too often. For example, at Juvenile Hall there have been three

principals in the past two years. This causes a change in focus or direction that is disruptive to continuity and management stability. The Grand Jury recommends that Institutional/YFRC schools should have their own dedicated PAR structure. This would strengthen the stability of PAR principals and administrators, allowing development of more consistent leadership, communication and direction.

Another area of concern, highlighted by questionnaires and interviews, was the budget and budget process for classroom textbooks and supplies for Institutional/YFRC schools. Comments about the budget process included that it lacked consistency and priority and was confusing to the teachers. Many teachers were frustrated and resorted to spending money out of their own pockets for supplies. Some solicited bookstores and other providers; at times the copy machine became the solution.

The process of dealing with an inadequate source of textbooks, coupled with a high degree of autonomy at each school site, creates a problem. Curriculum and textbooks vary greatly from site to site. Student abilities are incredibly diverse, and often students are described as having "scattered skills". Students frequently move from institution to institution and find themselves using different textbooks, a different version, or no textbook at all. Academic credit can be lost. This is frustrating for the student and potentially damaging to already bruised self-esteem.

The Grand Jury recommends that budget for textbooks, reference materials and supplies should be a priority item that is consistent and predictable. The process should be clear and well defined, and teachers should not have to bail out the system for adequate books and supplies. Curricular subjects such as mathematics, history, English, et al, should be standardized so that when the Orange County Probation Department finds it necessary to move a student from one site to another, the interruption to the educational process is minimized and credit for previous work is not lost.

The Department of Education has introduced two promising new computer-assisted instruction pilot programs. The New Century Program is a computer integrated learning system. It has several capabilities:

- Assessment of student academic needs in the areas of English, writing, reading and mathematics
- Creation of individualized remedial and developmental programs
- Recording of student progress and improvement.

The student learns in a computer laboratory with teaching staff assistance. Student progress is based on the minor's successful completion of work assignments. This program is operational at Juvenile Hall and the Youth Guidance Center.

Another pilot program is Bridges, utilized at Los Piños and Joplin Schools. The Bridges Program assesses student learning styles and diagnoses learning disabilities. A remedial program is created for the individual student. This is a computer-assisted program which allows students to proceed at their own pace with immediate feedback. OCDE teachers and Orange County Probation Department counselors have been trained in the operation of the system. Probation counselors can help students use the system during non-scheduled school time. Teachers and probation counselors benefit from working together in the educational rehabilitative process which should improve their communication and team building.

New Century and Bridges are complementary programs and can be effectively used in tandem. OCDE will be able to assess the effectiveness of both programs in combination once they are in operation at the Youth Guidance Center in the fall of 2001. These new programs, like many new projects, are initiated with the use of grant money that may not be renewable. OCDE should make these programs its own budget priority to continue and expand successful programs once the grants expire.

Both teachers and administrators questioned the wisdom of shifting emphasis from vocational education programs. Teaching vocational skills would enable many of these students to earn a good living and become mainstreamed into our society. Some of the young people in Institutional/YFRC schools will never become white collar or information systems workers. Vocational education and Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) should be re-examined because craft skills may be the only viable answer for some young people to successfully re-enter the community.

It was distressing to note while reviewing the 1993–1994 Orange County Grand Jury report on the Juvenile Court Schools that OCDE had not acted on many of the problems and recommended solutions. Some of these problems still exist today. One of the problems not addressed involved certificated academic counselors. The absence of academic counselors for students negates or dulls the effort of the educational program. Academic counselors at the Institutional/YFRC schools would solve a number of problems related to programming, transition of records, lost credits, individual student needs, interaction with community schools and communication with Field Probation Officers.

During site visits, it was evident that many of the educational facilities in the institutions provided by the Probation Department are inadequate and substandard. Since the County bankruptcy, maintenance and capital projects have been delayed or deferred. The Probation Department has worked hard to improve conditions, and has been successful to some extent, most notably the future classroom and office construction at Juvenile Hall. The Grand Jury also observed that the teaching staff office space at the Santa Ana Jail is inadequate. This is a Probation Department contract issue with the Santa Ana Jail. The Board of Supervisors should appropriate necessary funds to improve or replace juvenile facilities, including educational and support components.

The Orange County Department of Education is in the initial stages of acquiring accreditation for the ACCESS program through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). This accreditation is a voluntary process certifying that an educational institution meets established criteria or standards and is achieving its own stated objectives. Following a comprehensive self-study, a visiting committee of educational professionals conducts an on-site evaluation of programs and services of ACCESS. The WASC Accrediting Commission for Schools requires the application of qualitative criteria and substantial documentation of student performance rather than mere confirmation of a school's adherence to minimum quantitative standards.

The Grand Jury applauds and strongly supports the initial undertaking of the OCDE to seek accreditation for the ACCESS program. This process will bring Orange County Juvenile Court Schools in line with many other juvenile court schools in other counties and will, by necessity, resolve many problems noted in this report. Of all of our recommendations, accreditation has the potential of the greatest positive impact, and should receive the highest priority.

While sensitive to the issues of budgets and limited funds, and recognizing that the State directs the majority of the spending, this Grand Jury strongly believes that priorities and efforts should be re-ordered to enhance the opportunity to provide the highest quality education possible for these young people. Each and every one of them will be returning to the community. Society has an affirmative obligation to do everything possible to mainstream these young people so they can become productive and law abiding citizens.

## **Internal Communication**

The Grand Jury studied two communication issues: 1) within the Orange County Department of Education hierarchy and 2) between probation and education staffs. Even though all sites have formal and informal communication channels such as staff meetings, phone, e-mail and conferences, there are problem areas.

Some Institutional/YFRC teachers expressed a belief that the Orange County Probation Department and the OCDE do not work well together. Teachers often feel like outsiders. Some educators indicated that an "us vs. them" attitude exists; there is not a true collaborative or partnering effort. Others stated it was improving, particularly in recent months. Some teachers felt the education of minors in the institutions was not a priority for Probation personnel, and some Probation Department employees had a "law enforcement" attitude. It became clear that there needs to be a greater emphasis on partnering and collaboration. Even in the YFRCs, which were designed as collaborative models, there exists a need for more team building and partnerships, particularly in case selection and management. Once the Probation Department satisfies the requirement for safety and security, the primary objective of both Departments should be to provide quality education as part of the rehabilitation process.

Some Probation Department staff indicated that their interface with the OCDE was in need of improvement. The high turnover rate of principals and vice-principals contributes to a breakdown in channels of communication and disrupts the previously established focus and direction. Teachers expressed a need to agree upon and abide by duties and responsibilities regarding educational goals and methods of collaboration. Though there are meetings between teachers and probation staff, it would appear that they deal only with individual problem-solving and not collaborative programming.

Quality communication between probation and teachers is lacking. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), for the provision of support services for Joint Community and Grant Programs operated jointly by the Orange County Probation Department and Orange County Superintendent of Schools, was executed prior to YFRC's inception. There is a need to formalize a more current MOU. A draft was undertaken as an update but has not been approved. The MOU spells out the specific responsibilities of the Probation Department, OCDE and the areas of joint responsibility. This formal statement, when implemented, should lead to much improved communication between these entities.

There were a number of complaints from teachers and administrators which indicated that internal communication in the OCDE is primarily from the top down. PAR principals are stretched too thin, resulting in a breakdown in communication between OCDE headquarters and individual sites. Communication between the site liaison teacher and the teaching staff appears to work well, particularly at smaller sites. There is little communication among personnel from site to site. This was demonstrated when the Grand Jury questioned personnel at the sites regarding their knowledge of two new education programs, New Century and Bridges. Teaching personnel only had knowledge of the specific program used at their site. Probation staff was



sometimes not even aware of the computer-assisted instruction programs at their own site. There is need for more sharing of information from one school site to another. In this way teachers and probation staff can share common experiences and concepts.

## **Staff Development**

The Grand Jury identified several educational staff development areas to examine including:

- Training for new teachers and substitute teachers
- Conferences and workshops for classroom instruction
- Opportunities to attend specialized institutes and conferences offered by the Orange County Department of Education and other providers

At the beginning of a teaching assignment, new teachers and substitute teachers undergo safety and security training. At Juvenile Hall, the training is conducted jointly by the Orange County Department of Education and the Orange County Probation Department staff. It includes an overview of the organization, supervision, management practices, and principles of safety and security. The training also includes discussion on lesson plans, classroom procedures, discipline and serious incident report writing. The Probation Department and OCDE independently conduct on-site safety and security training at other Institutional/YFRC schools. This training would be more effective if conducted jointly at a central site.

Interviews with teachers established that although there are staff development opportunities, many of these are not germane to the specialized situations and the instruction that occur in these schools. The teachers indicated wide acceptance both as to quantity and quality of staff development programs that are offered. While these are useful, they do not address the specialized needs that teachers face on a daily basis. For example, student reading skills can vary from a 3<sup>rd</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> grade level within the same classroom. The same wide skill levels exist with mathematics. Experienced teachers have recognized this diversity and have expressed a desire for more specialized training. This need is critical. Neither new teachers nor substitute teachers receive classroom management and teaching techniques training that would prepare them to deal with students of such diverse academic competency or behavioral problems.

Institutional/YFRC schools have unique teaching challenges in classroom instruction: a wide range of ages and academic proficiencies and the relatively short duration that students are under the guidance of the teacher. There is some

mentoring of new faculty by other on-site teachers; however, for the most part, it is sink-or-swim in the early part of the new teacher's tenure. In recent months, the OCDE offered a district-wide training workshop, the National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement, developed by the United States Department of Justice in conjunction with Michigan State University. Selected teachers and probation staff who will serve as trainers for other teachers attended the session. The curriculum provided attendees with the necessary skills to train personnel in techniques that can be used to bring positive changes in delinquent youth. Such training should improve communication between probation personnel and educators. This worthwhile program will also assist in team building and developing collaborative efforts and should be implemented as quickly as feasible.

OCDE should initiate more specialized classroom training to provide for more effective teaching for new faculty and substitute teachers prior to their assignment. Workshops conducted by experienced faculty would be a cost effective and efficient way to provide for improved teaching performance.

### **Institutional/YFRC School Libraries**

California Education Code § 18100 states in part, "The governing board of each school district shall provide school library services for the pupils and teachers of the district by establishing and maintaining school libraries..." § 18176(b) continues, "...it is the intent of the Legislature to ensure that services and materials in public school library media programs and centers in kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, be maintained at a level sufficient to enable pupils to become independent learners during their school years...The Legislature intends that, by encouraging literacy in the elementary grades under this article, the high rate of pupils who drop out of school prior to graduation from high school will be reduced."

Students in the Orange County Juvenile Court School system would greatly benefit from such library services since they are generally behind in their literacy skills and are a captive audience while in detention. Unfortunately, this opportunity is not being seized by ACCESS.

The Grand Jury visited every Institutional/YFRC School site and observed their library program. Most locations have some books donated by teachers or the public, supplemented by recreational reading material purchased by the Probation Department using the Ward Welfare Fund. There is no specific library budget other than grants allocated to the individual schools from the Orange County Department of Education. Over the past fifteen years many efforts have been made to secure private or public sector grants for library services, but to

little avail. The 1993–1994 Grand Jury recommended that the Superintendent of Schools of Orange County “Give strong support to all court school libraries...” to which OCDE responded, “...There is strong support by a variety of groups and donations of books have been pouring in.” However, there was no promise of an OCDE library budget.

The California Public School Library Act of 1998, Education Code §18180, et seq., provides state funding to school districts to supplement a district’s library program. Additionally, the Act was modified in 1999 to include Juvenile Court Schools. The Act allocates approximately \$28/year per pupil in state funds for the purchase of books, reading materials and supporting software. However, schools must have a designated space for a library and support a library staff within their operating budget.

The OCDE budgeted for a small library staff for the entire ACCESS program to qualify for state library funds. For Fiscal Year 2000–2001, OCDE received a state grant in the amount of \$223,567 for libraries. However, lack of library space at the various sites hinders progress of the Institutional/YFRC portion of the ACCESS library program. Initial focus has been to establish the library at Juvenile Hall, but the small staff has been fully occupied with time consuming tasks of data entry and related book processing. Very few books have been purchased with state grant funds at Juvenile Hall. No books have been purchased with these funds at Joplin and Los Piños Schools or the small sites such as Santa Ana City Jail and the YFRCs. Therefore, it appears that the Institutional/YFRC Schools are receiving far less than their fair share of state book funds. The OCDE will carryover approximately \$100,000 of the State Library Act funds to Fiscal Year 2001–2002.

The 2000–2001 ACCESS Library Program Plan submitted to the State to requalify for library funds addresses these staffing and space issues in several phases. The Plan is ambitious and its implementation is highly dependent on OCDE providing funds for library technicians and library media teachers over the next two years.

Most sites have a recreational reading program. These programs have developed over recent years due to the initiative of the site teachers and probation staff. A few library shelves have been installed at some facilities and a small collection of reading materials has been acquired from various sources. The Probation Department purchases recreational reading books using the Ward Welfare Fund. Many teachers purchase books with out-of-pocket money and the general public donates books. The program has been extremely popular with the students as evidenced by wear and tear of the paperback books and by corresponding advances in student reading levels. However, the program quality

is spotty across the various sites. Joplin School now has a successful evening recreational reading program, supervised by probation and operated by the students. Juvenile Hall and the Juvenile Hall Annex now have reading carts, but the other sites may have fewer or no carts at all.

The Grand Jury believes a recreational reading program can effectively supplement a school library, but not replace it. OCDE should give high priority to development of a school library serving all Institutional/YFRC sites. The OCDE should provide the necessary budget for library staff as planned in the Department's Application for Funding, FY 2000–2001, under The California Public School Library Act. OCDE and Probation should also make a clear distinction between school library material and recreational reading material. Conditions for the purchase of books using the Ward Welfare Fund should also be defined.

### **Transition Process**

Accurate accounting and management of student records are essential to the effective operation of a school system. Educational records must be kept on each youth while in the Juvenile Court School system. Records must be obtained from prior academic institutions, updated while in the Juvenile Court School system and forwarded to academic institutions upon release. In a report on the Juvenile Court Schools, the 1993–94 Orange County Grand Jury found that there was a problem regarding transfer of high school credits for students transferring from one Juvenile Court School to another within the system. OCDE responded that:

- all credits for schoolwork are forwarded to the receiving school district and applied toward graduation,
- there was no problem with students losing credits for school work performed when they transfer from one school to another in the system,
- fax machines are used to transfer transcripts, and
- Juvenile Court Schools will be networked to a central file and all authorized personnel will have access to the files of any student at any of the sites.

However, the 2000–2001 Grand Jury has found there is still a problem in that the transfer of records is inefficient and not processed in a timely fashion.

ACCESS uses a computer-based Schools Administrative Student Information (SASI) system to manage student records. Records include Average Daily Attendance (ADA), transcript information, grades, demographics, history and disciplinary action. This software is used by several school districts in the County.

These school districts are traditional since most students are located at one education site for at least a semester. The challenge for ACCESS Juvenile Court Schools is students frequently move among the educational sites, often remaining for short periods. Keeping accurate account of records is difficult. Student course credit is sometimes lost in transition and course work is repeated unnecessarily. Some students have a doubling of credits. These problems appear to be caused by inadequate software, and slow and inaccurate data entry. There is no computer link between Juvenile Court Schools and local schools. This is a problem and has been a concern of the Juvenile Justice Commission for years. The system is centralized at OCDE and each PAR has the ability to enter data.

A computer program is needed that will more accurately document credits. OCDE is reportedly investigating and analyzing the procurement of a new software package that would better manage student records. The teachers and other authorized staff at individual education sites should have access to the student database as long as security is maintained.

Upon release, a collaborative effort is required to effectively transition a juvenile from an institutional school to a local school and community. OCDE has responsibility for educational transition and the Probation Department has responsibility for supervision of juveniles upon release from the institutions. The Probation Department has a Transition Deputy Probation Officer assigned to each of the following sites: Joplin, Los Piños, Youth Guidance Center and Juvenile Hall. This officer arranges for a meeting with the Field Probation Officer before the juvenile is released from the Youth Guidance Center and Juvenile Hall. However, this is rarely done for juvenile releases at Joplin and Los Piños because of their remote location. This hampers the juvenile's effective integration back into the school and community.

In September 2000, OCDE hired one Transition Specialist under Federal Title I Funds. The function of the Transition Specialist is to provide effective support and guidance during the transitional phase from detention back to the community. At this time, the one Transition Specialist provides transition services to 30 of the older youth in Juvenile Hall. There are usually over 100 students in the entire system preparing for release. Additional transition specialists are needed.

OCDE and Probation Department have initiated a youth development program to reduce the risk of recidivism. This program is utilized in the YFRCs where a transitional meeting is held with current students and alumni. Each meeting is staffed with a psychologist, a therapist and the Title I Transition Specialist. The development of necessary skills to succeed in relation to education, work, legal compliance and mental health upon release is a program objective.

## **METHOD OF STUDY**

The Grand Jury visited all Juvenile Institutional School sites including: Juvenile Hall, Juvenile Hall Annex, Youth Guidance Center, Joplin Youth Center, Los Piños Conservation Camp, Santa Ana City Jail, the Central Men's Jail and the five Youth and Family Resource Centers. At these sites the Grand Jury interviewed school administrators, teachers, education specialists, probation officers, probation counselors and students. To acquire information for this report the Grand Jury prepared questionnaires on observed issues from initial site visits. Responses were obtained from teachers, administrators and probation staff. Follow-up interviews were conducted.

The Grand Jury interviewed administrators of the Orange County Probation Department, the Orange County Department of Education and the administrative staff of the ACCESS Program. Written materials dealing with the ACCESS Mission Statement, strategies, goals and objectives were reviewed. Plans for the school libraries were reviewed. Budget documents from OCDE were reviewed, as was an existing and proposed revision of an MOU between OCDE and Probation Department.

The Grand Jury attended monthly meetings of the Juvenile Justice Commission, where OCDE and probation staff report on progress made at the Juvenile Institutional/YFRC schools.

The Grand Jury reviewed the California Education Code, California Welfare and Institutions Code, California Code of Regulations, the 1993–1994 Orange County Grand Jury Report on Juvenile Court Schools and Responses, and the California State Department of Education web site.

To better understand operations of Institutional schools, the Grand Jury also visited Orangewood, various Orange County group homes and California Youth Authority Institutions in Whittier and Camarillo.

## **FINDINGS**

Under California Penal Code § 933 and § 933.05, responses are required to all findings. The 2000–2001 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at the following 29 findings:

1. The Juvenile Court Schools, more specifically the Institutional/YFRC Schools, are scattered across the entire ACCESS program which consists of more than 80 sites.
2. There is no specific mission statement, strategic plan, or goals and objectives for the Institutional/YFRC Schools.

3. The Principal Administrative Regions (PARs) are too large and too diverse to provide adequate supervision for the Institutional/YFRC Schools.
4. There is a lack of stability of PAR principals and administrators to establish consistent leadership and direction for the Institutional/YFRC Schools.
5. Budget and the budget process for textbooks and supplies for the Institutional/YFRC Schools lack consistency and priority.
6. The vast majority of the teachers and staff is dedicated and committed as evidenced by the expenditure of hundreds of dollars of personal funds for classroom supplies and equipment.
7. Curriculum varies greatly from site to site in the Institutional/YFRC Schools because they operate with a great deal of autonomy. An inadequate supply of textbooks adds to the problem.
8. Two computer-assisted programs are used at several sites. The Bridges program diagnoses learning disabilities. It is used at Joplin and Los Piños Schools. The New Century program, an integrated learning system, is used at Juvenile Hall and the Youth Guidance Center.
9. The lack of sufficient vocational education programs in the Institutional/YFRC Schools impedes the acquisition of practical job skills for youth released from Institutions.
10. There are no certificated academic counselors available for students in the Institutional/YFRC Schools.
11. The perception of a lack of partnership between probation and school personnel exists in the Institutional Schools, and to a lesser extent, the YFRC Schools.
12. Some Institutional School facilities provided by the Probation Department have inadequate space and have experienced substandard or deferred maintenance.
13. Office space for teaching staff at Santa Ana Jail is inadequate.
14. The ACCESS program is in the process of seeking accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. A Program Quality Review has been prepared.
15. Many Institutional/YFRC teachers believe that probation and education do not work well together. Teachers often feel like outsiders.
16. The interface between OCDE and Probation Department is poor in the area of collaboration. There is also a lack of stability of principals, vice principals and teachers in the Institutional/YFRC Schools.
17. Communication in the ACCESS program is from top down with little participation from the bottom up.

18. A program for personnel training, National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement, is being implemented in a plan to bring the program to both education and probation personnel.
19. The assignment of PAR principals to multiple sites results in inadequate communication and guidance.
20. An updated Memorandum of Understanding for the Operation of Probation Facility Schools between the Orange County Probation Department and Orange County Superintendent of Schools has been drafted but not approved.
21. New and substitute teachers do not receive specialized classroom training prior to teaching in Institutional/YFRC School settings.
22. Staff development workshops and conferences are not always relevant to actual classroom instruction in the Institutional/YFRC Schools.
23. There is no central site offering safety and security training for teachers assigned to Institutional/YFRC Schools.
24. The only established Institutional/YFRC School library facility is located at Juvenile Hall.
25. Book purchases for Institutional/YFRC Schools under the California Public School Library Act have been minimal due to lack of library staff and space at the various sites. This has resulted in significant (>40%) carryover of state funds to next fiscal year.
26. A modest recreational reading program has been established at Joplin Youth Center, Juvenile Hall and Juvenile Hall Annex with purchases from the Ward Welfare Fund and donations from teachers and the general public.
27. There is a problem in the accuracy, timely recordation and transfer of academic credits for youth entering, within, and exiting Institutional/YFRC Schools.
28. Most youth do not meet with a Field Probation Officer prior to release from either Joplin Youth Center or Los Piños Conservation Camp.
29. The OCDE Transition Specialist serves about one third of those minors soon to be released.

**A response to Finding 12 is required from the Orange County Board of Supervisors.**

**Responses to Findings 1-11 and 14-27 and 29 are required from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools.**

**Responses to Findings 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 26 and 28 are requested from the Orange County Probation Department.**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with California Penal Code § 933 and § 933.05, each recommendation requires a response from the government entity to which it is addressed. These responses are submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Based upon the findings, the 2000–2001 Orange County Grand Jury recommends that:

1. The Institutional/YFRC Schools should be organized and administered as a separate unit in the ACCESS program with a mission statement, strategic plan and goals and objectives unique and specific to its purpose. (Findings 1 and 2)
2. The Principal Administrative Regions (PARs) should be reorganized to maximize effectiveness of the Institutional/YFRC Schools. (Finding 3, 4 and 19)
3. The budget for books and supplies for the Institutional/YFRC Schools should be given high priority, with consistent dollar amounts from year to year to enable effective planning. Procedures for acquisition of books and supplies should be uncomplicated. (Findings 5 and 6)
4. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should develop a standard curriculum and list of appropriate textbooks and educational materials that will maximize the learning experience while minimizing the disruption as students transition between Institutional/YFRC Schools. (Finding 7)
5. The New Century and Bridges programs should be evaluated for educational effectiveness and, if appropriate, the Orange County Superintendent of Schools should expand and provide permanent funding. (Finding 8)
6. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should expand vocational education programs in the Institutional/YFRC Schools that can provide job skills. (Finding 9)
7. The addition of certificated academic counselors for students in the Institutional/YFRC Schools should be a priority of the Orange County Superintendent of Schools. (Finding 10)
8. The Probation Department should continue to renovate and replace schoolrooms and offices in their juvenile facilities. (Finding 12)
9. The Probation Department should request additional office space for teaching staff at Santa Ana Jail. (Finding 13)
10. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should give highest priority to full accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for the ACCESS program. (Finding 14)

11. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools and Probation Department should develop training and team building to enhance partnership and collaboration. (Finding 11 and 15)
12. Probation, teachers and the Orange County Superintendent of Schools administrators should have regular meetings to discuss educational goals and responsibilities. (Finding 16 and 17)
13. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should conduct training sessions based on the National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement Program. (Finding 18)
14. The draft of the Memorandum of Understanding for the Operation of Probation Facility Schools between the Orange County Probation Department and Orange County Superintendent of Schools should be completed and implemented. (Finding 20)
15. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should institute instructional methods training for new and substitute teachers assigned to Institutional/YFRC Schools. (Finding 21)
16. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should offer additional teacher workshops and seminars aimed at correctional school programs. (Finding 22)
17. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools and Probation Department should conduct a standard Safety and Security Program for new Institutional/YFRC School faculty to be held at a central site. (Finding 23)
18. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should give high priority to development of school libraries serving all Institutional/YFRC Schools and provide adequate budget for library staff. (Finding 24 and 25)
19. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should assume sole responsibility for providing library books and materials for the Institutional/YFRC Schools. (Finding 25 and 26)
20. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should develop and implement a plan to replace SASI with a new program that will maintain accurate and timely records accessible by authorized education personnel. (Finding 27)
21. All Wards should meet with their Field Probation Officer prior to release from Institutional/YFRC Schools. (Finding 28)
22. The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should develop and implement a plan to provide transition specialist services to all juveniles preparing for release. (Finding 29)

**A response is required to Recommendation 8 from the Orange County Board of Supervisors.**

**Responses are required to Recommendations 1-7, 10-20 and 22 from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools.**

**Responses are requested to Recommendations 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19 and 21 from the Orange County Probation Department.**

## **COMMENDATIONS**

The Orange County Grand Jury commends the Orange County Department of Education for the following accomplishments:

- Initiated full accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Planned implementation of the National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement
- Discussed and analyzed the reconfiguration of PARs on a functional basis
- Hired a Librarian and Transition Specialist for Juvenile Court Schools
- Initiated the New Century and Bridges programs at Juvenile Court School sites
- Identified additional funds for school textbooks and supplies for this year

The Orange County Grand Jury commends the Orange County Probation Department for the following accomplishments:

- Developed building plans and initiated renovation of facilities at the Youth Guidance Center and Juvenile Hall.
- Participated with OCDE in the National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement program.
- Trained Probation Counselors in the Bridges program at the Los Piños Conservation Camp.
- Provided financial resources for establishment of the recreational reading programs.
- Supported the New Century program with funds from the ASERT grant for the Youth Guidance Center.

The Grand Jury recognizes the dedicated teachers and staff that provide quality education at the Institutional/YFRC Schools.

## **APPENDIX**

Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), ACCESS budget information, 2001

OCDE, various budget documents 1999–2000

California State Education Code

OCDE, Various organizational and administrative documents

Orange County Probation Department, various organizational and administrative documents

OCDE, *ACCESS Strategic Plan* 1998–2003

OCDE, *ACCESS Program Quality Review* 1999

OCDE, *Educational Options* 2000–2001

OCDE, *Materials for National Training Curriculum for Educators of Youth in Confinement*, 2000

OCDE, *Materials for New Century and Bridges Programs*, 2000

OCDE, *Safety and Security Training For Substitute Teachers at Fisher School Material*, 2001

OCDE, *ACCESS 1999–2000 Action Research*, 2000

OCDE, *ACCESS OUR STARS: Students Achieving Remarkable Success*, 2000

OCDE, *School Accountability Report Card for Los Rios and Otto Fisher*, 1999

1993–1994 *Orange County Grand Jury Report and Responses on Juvenile Court Schools*, 1994

OCDE, *ACCESS Library Program for Higher Achievement*, 2001

Schumacher, Michael and Gwen A Kurz. *The 8% Solution: Preventing Serious, Repeat Juvenile Crime*. Sage Publications, Inc. 2000