

Meeting Minutes

Education in Local Detention Centers Advisory Group Meeting

Virtual Meeting

September 14, 2020
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Attendees:

Amy Atkinson, Melinda Boone, Tanner Boyle, Marilyn Brown, Laurie Cooper, John Day, Will Egen, Barry Green, Jeffrey Levine, W. Rice Lilley, Sen. Dave Marsden, Alicia Myrick, Mary Ann Plogger, Angela Valentine, Carla White, Tyler Williams, Amy Woolard, Joe Young

I. Welcome and Introductions

The Honorable Dave Marsden, Chairman, Virginia Commission on Youth

Senator Marsden welcomed the Advisory Group and offered some history about the changes in juvenile detention centers and overall decline in student population. He notes that the Commission would like to evaluate the overall education system in place in light of reduced student population to see if services could be provided more efficiently.

Amy Atkinson led Advisory Board introductions.

II. Education in Detention – A Superintendent's Perspective

Carla White, Rappahannock Juvenile Center
Joe Young, New River Valley

Superintendents Carla White and Joe Young discussed the educational systems at Rappahannock and New River Valley Juvenile Detention Centers. They highlighted the special education needs of their students due to trauma. Students at New River Valley have an average Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) score of 6 out of 10. Both stressed that they believe the goal of their educational programs are to rehabilitate youth who otherwise would not succeed as adults.

Senator Marsden asked how online learning was used. Both superintendents said that they use some online learning as a resource only, as students tend to need one-on-one assistance. They noted that full online learning during COVID-19 was not successful for this reason. In addition, they have substantial technology problems.

III. Education in Detention – A Principal’s Perspective

Tanner Boyle, Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention

John Day, Newport News Juvenile Detention

Principals Boyle and Day noted that students speak highly of their educational programs. Boyle stated that for Pre- and Post-D students, their goal is to provide comparable educational services, and for CPP students, their goal is to help them graduate. He noted their teachers may have 8-10 students in a class who are of multiple ages, and that they hire the best educators available. Principal Day stated that their goal is to take a holistic approach to educate youth who have trauma backgrounds and emotional and behavioral needs. He notes that online learning takes a disciplined, well read, motivated student, and that students in detention tend to have very short attention spans and low reading levels.

Senator Marsden asked what teachers do when not teaching a class. Principal Boyle responded that teachers are working with post graduates and individually with students. Principal Day stated that teacher activities vary by facility; at Newport News, teachers always have a class with 10-12 students.

IV. Education in Detention – A Teacher’s Perspective

Alicia Myrick, Virginia Beach Juvenile Detention

Mary Ann Plogger, Shenandoah Juvenile Detention

Ms. Myrick and Ms. Plogger described how the teaching team collectively works to create individualized plans for each student. Their goal is to give students the skills they will need to succeed after graduation, including social skills and life skills. Ms. Plogger noted that many students need hands on learning, and students doing activities online often need one-on-one supervision.

V. Roundtable Discussion

Amy Woolard suggested that student-teacher ratios might be more comparable with a private day school or special education program, and Ms. Atkinson said she would provide information about typical student-teacher ratios in these facilities. Jeff Levine requested more information about minimum student-teacher ratios, how many youth in detention centers were in special education, and information about length of stay. He suggests that analyzing this data against student-teacher ratios would give a better picture about what was needed.

Barry Green asked for clarification about how DJJ funding factors into overall funding. Angela Valentine explained that DJJ pays the facility a per diem and pays for things such as college classes. The facility may use some funding for supplies, but they don’t use it for Pre-D and Post-D daily education services.

Melinda Boone asked for specific numbers of special education teachers at each facility represented. Mr. Day noted that sometimes 30-40 percent of students will have an IEP. Ms. Boone also asked if youth are taught together. That varied also from facility to facility. In addition, some youth cannot be together because of legal issues.

Ms. Woolard asked if any education measures had been developed. Laurie Cooper said she will provide data on reading and math scores, as well as GED and diploma information, for youth who are in detention for more than 30 days.

Mr. Green asked what the educational goals for Pre-D, Post-D, and CPP students? Group discussion revealed that for Pre-D students (short term), the detention center contacted the home school and made every effort to keep the student aligned with their current classes so they would not fall behind. For Post-D and CPP students (long term), staff develops an educational plan with graduation as a goal. Most local detention centers work very closely with local schools.

Senator Marsden requested information on length of stay for students broken down in four categories: youth waiting for a hearing, youth detained until adjudication, youth released after their final hearing (dispositional), and youth who are placed in detention centers. Mr. Green asked for information about what types of services need to be provided for these four groups, and how outcomes are measured. He also requested that length of stay figures be broken down seasonally so trends could be noted.

VI. Next Steps and Adjournment

The group discussed options for completing the study this year or creating a two-year study, which will be decided at the next meeting. A two-year study would allow visits to detention centers, for community members to be heard, and for more robust data collection and analysis. Mr. Green cautioned that this decision should be balanced by the possibility that funding would be cut before the study was complete.

Senator Marsden also said he would like to hear from the Department of Education and Senate Finance in terms of how they evaluate educational costs.

Ms. Atkinson stated that staff would provide 1) Title 1 reporting information on reading and math; 2) student-teacher ratios for each detention center; 3) length of stay data; and 4) DJJ funding information. Ms. Atkinson will email Advisory Group members about a date for an early October meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

The video of this meeting can be found at the following link: [Meeting Video Archive](#)