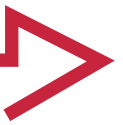


PROGRAMS AND SECURE CAMPUSES



DJJ AND GEORGIA STATE PARTNER FOR UNIQUE LITERACY STUDY

THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT of Juvenile Justice, in partnership with Georgia State University (GSU), has undertaken a one-of-a-kind study to find the best way to improve the reading skills of incarcerated youth throughout the nation.

Funded by a \$2.9 million grant from the United States Department of Education, Project LIBERATE (Literacy Instruction Based on Evidence through Research for Adjudicated Teens to Excel), is a four-year longitudinal study being conducted by DJJ and Georgia State University's Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education. The purpose of the study is to find a national model for teaching literacy skills to middle school aged children in a juvenile justice setting. The grant, which comes from the Institute of Education Science (IES), an office within the United States Department of Education, is the only one of its kind in the nation. The research will be conducted at the Bill Ireland Youth Development Campus (YDC) in Milledgeville.

Director of Education Dr. Jack Catrett said DJJ's education program, which is accredited by the Southern Associa-

tion of Colleges and Schools (SACS), has an excellent reputation and that being awarded such a prestigious grant speaks well of the state of the agency.

"It's an honor for us to be chosen to do this," he said.

Dr. Catrett said reading, writing and spelling are essential skills youth must have if they are going to be successful after they are released from the juvenile justice system. Teaching these skills is a challenge because youth who come into the system have already fallen behind academically. Conducting the study inside a YDC is an advantage because it will allow researchers to determine what works best in a real correctional setting.

"When they come to us, most of these kids are two years behind in grade level and reading level," Catrett said.

Dr. David Houchins, associate professor of special education at GSU, and the chief investigator for the project, said the Project LIBERATE grant builds on ongoing collaboration between GSU and DJJ. Previous reading education studies have been

conducted at the Sumter and Bill Ireland YDCs. Those collaborations paved the way for the present study.

"Those initial collaboration successes have allowed us to be able to compete nationally for an IES grant," Houchins said.



Dr. Houchins said the target population for the study is youth up to 16 years old who are not reading at their grade level. The study will include about 150 youths each year, and they will receive two periods a day of reading and language arts instruction.

Dr. Catrett said that the youths will be divided into five different study groups based on age and ability, and they will be taught with different methods and closely monitored during the course of the study. The study will include youth in special education, who comprise about 40 percent of the Department's students.

"It's quite an undertaking because it involves five teachers and five aides," Catrett said.

DJJ EMPLOYEES ATTEND NATIONAL GANG SYMPOSIUM

Thirteen DJJ employees attended the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) National Youth Gang Symposium, which was held in downtown Atlanta June 23-25, 2008.

The symposium, which was co-sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club of Atlanta, featured many workshops and sessions designed to educate corrections professionals and others who work daily with youths on the latest trends in gang culture and how to work with those youths to try and combat the negative influence of gangs on young people.

LaShonda Williams, a program coordinator at the Sumter Youth Development Campus (YDC), said she found the symposium informative and was impressed with a session she attended on the history and influence of gangster rap.



DJJ staff at the OJJDP Gang Symposium

