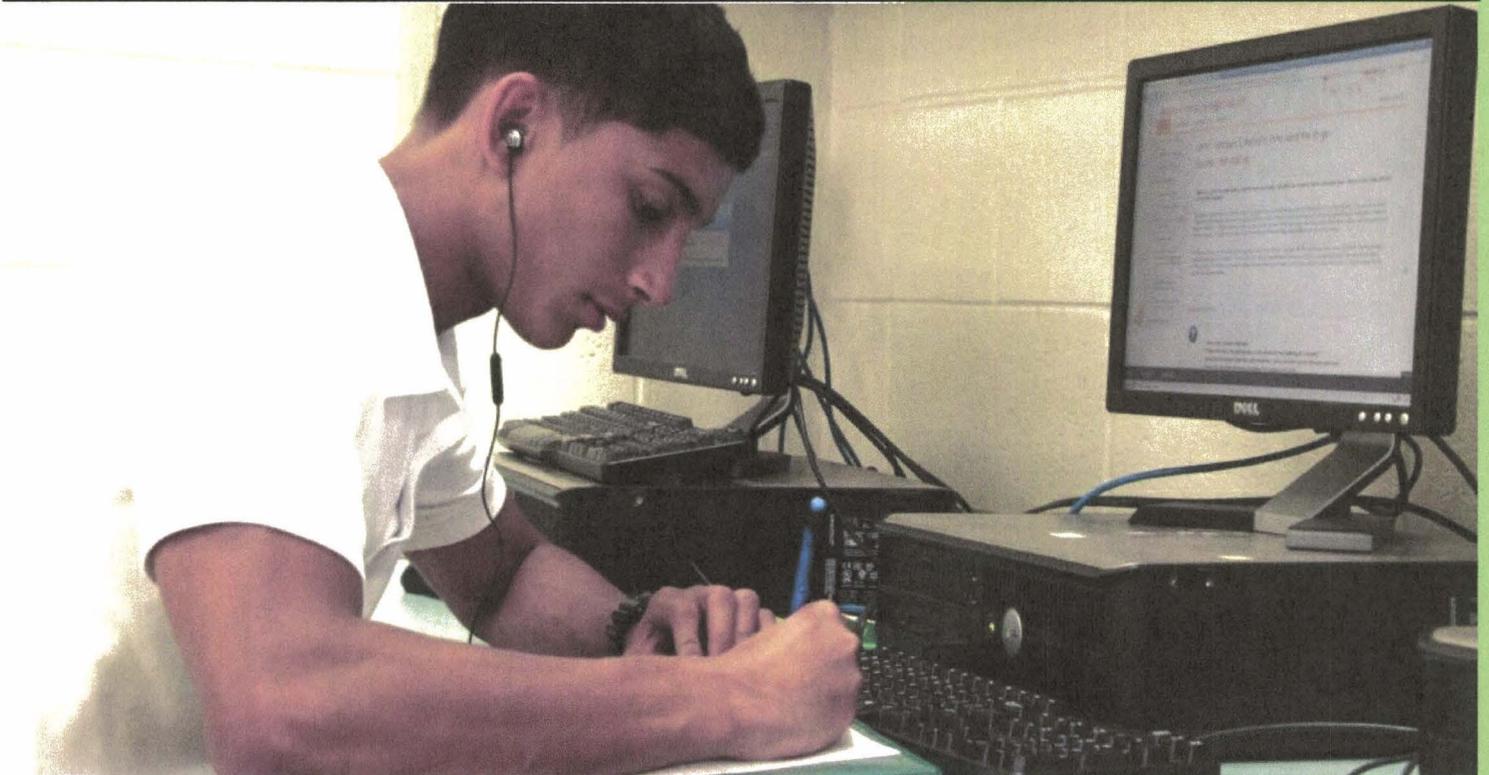


Addressing Student Academic Needs through Teacher Certification within the SCDJJ School District



Project Presented for the SC CPM Program

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Introduction

Decades of educational research has shown an unequivocal positive relationship between teacher quality and student academic achievement. (Policy Studies Associates, 2005) More specifically, quality teachers, quality curriculum and quality resources are the three most important educational indicators that lead to the highest gains in test scores; especially for low-income students and at-risk students according to Darling – Hammond, Zielenzinski & Goldman (2014). These three key indicators of educational access provide the bridge that helps close the achievement gap between students of color and their affluent white counterparts. Furthermore, in the digital age research has determined that “if at-risk students gain ready access to appropriate technology used in thoughtful ways, they can make substantial gains in learning...” (ibid).

The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice is considered by the State Department of Education (SDE) as a special school district comprised of one institutional facility, a detention facility, four evaluation centers, and ten private provider community residence placement facilities. Academic instruction, GED preparation and Career and Technology training for students in grades five through twelve takes place on its various facilities spread throughout the state.

The student population consists of students who have been adjudicated for committing one or more offenses from misdemeanors to felonies. It also consists of youth considered delinquent of committing juvenile offenses such as truancy, running away or disturbing schools. Although specific numbers vary throughout any given time in the year, the student population averages approximately 850 students enrolled in academic instruction throughout the SCDJJ District. Whereas some students have been expelled from their previous public schools, others have not and plan to return there once their commitment time is completed. Students at DJJ generally lag behind their public school peers academically by two to three grades, are approximately 57 percent minority background and 48 percent recipients of Special Education services. The SCDJJ school district is a Title 1 school district where 100 percent of the student population are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and / or are Medicaid-eligible. (SC State Report Card, 2015)

For low-income students, who have been expelled from their local public schools and who find themselves navigating the legal system due to their delinquency, SCDJJ school district becomes the last opportunity to gain the necessary education that will prepare them to participate in their communities.

Problem Statement

How can the Education Division at SCDJJ comply with State Department of Education (SDE) teacher certification standards to validate its school district's educational program and achieve one hundred percent SDE teacher certification compliance at all of the educational facilities managed by SCDJJ?

GAP Statement: After a thorough review of faculty teaching certifications it was discovered that there was a lack of secondary content area certified teaching staff at each SCDJJ educational facility, to include private provider locations to meet the SDE requirements for students seeking Carnegie Unit credit for courses taken.

As Technology Instructional Coordinator, I have been given our superintendent's priority project of finding ways using technology to ensure that we are in compliance with SC Dept. of Education mandates with teacher certification for the high school courses we offer. Because our teachers are also state government employees, state HR regulations dictate the terms of their employment; therefore, they cannot be dismissed for lack of adequate certification since they were hired with their current teaching credentials for the positions they currently hold. Likewise, although we *may suggest* that they gain the necessary credentials, we cannot mandate it since that would require pursuing additional educational instruction at each employees' own expense; an expense our agency would not be willing to absorb.

In finding technology- based ways to allow our agency to be in compliance with SDE teacher certification mandates, it is important ensure that each high school student receives appropriate instruction from a content area state - certified teacher, but also that SCDJJ avoids potential HR complications due to previous hiring practices that allowed faculty to be hired for positions without the appropriate teaching certification due to a shortage of qualified applicants.

Due to the conclusions of teacher quality and student achievement research, the SC State Department of Education mandates teacher certification compliance in order to support the validity of each educational institution's program of academic instruction. SCDJJ is currently certification non-compliant in private provider facilities and some evaluation centers. We have been operating under a proficiency-based system (PBS). However, in the PBS agreement SCDJJ stated that due to inadequate staff and resources we would reinforce academic instruction with a virtual school option. Students need to have instructional staff who are state - certified and expert in content in order to adequately meet student academic needs and validate credits earned.

Data Collection

Table 1: Current Teacher Resource Allocation and Average Student Enrollment:

Educational Facility	Teachers / Instructors	Average Daily Student Enrollment	Average Total Number of Students Served Daily by Individual Teachers
SCDJJ Faculty			
Birchwood School	Certified Academic 10 Non-HS Certified 2 Career and Technology in Education (CATE) 7 Electives 4 <u>Associate 5</u> Total 28	70	Certified Academic 25 CATE 11 Electives 23 Associate 8
CMU Crisis Management Unit (located on Birchwood campus)	Certified Academic 1 Premier Alternative Certification Program (PACE) 1 <u>Associate 1</u> Total 3	15	Each teacher 15
Union Evaluation Center	Certified Academic 2 Non-HS Certified 1 <u>Associate 1</u> Total 4	83	Each teacher 83
Coastal Evaluation Center	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 2 <u>Associate 1</u> Total 4	75	Each teacher 75
Midlands Evaluation Center	Certified Academic 2 Non-HS Certified 2 <u>Associate 1</u> Total 5	80	Each teacher 80
Detention Center	Certified Academic 2 Non-HS Certified 3 <u>Associate 1</u> Total 4	85	Each teacher 85

Educational Facility	Teachers / Instructors	Average Daily Student Enrollment	Average Total Number of Students Served Daily by Individual Teachers
Private Providers			
Aspen	Non-HS Certified 2	20	Each teacher 20
Beaufort	Certified Academic 3 Associate 1 Total 4	15	Each teacher 15
Bennettsville	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 2 Total 3	10	Each teacher 10
Ghigau	Non-HS Certified 1 Associate 1 Total 2	12	Each teacher 12
Georgetown	Non-HS Certified 1 Electives 1 Total 2	17	Each teacher 17
Piedmont	Certified Academic 1 Working through PACE 1 Non-HS Certified 2 Associate 1 Total 5	20	Each teacher 20
Sandhills	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 2 Associate 1 Total 4	20	Each teacher 20
White Pines I	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 2 Associate 1 Total 4	17	Each teacher 17
White Pines II	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 2 Associate 1 Total 4	14	Each teacher 14
Youth Development Center	Certified Academic 1 Non-HS Certified 1 Total 2	15	Each teacher 15

For a small to medium high school of approximately 600 students, a teacher's total average daily student counts run from 100 – 140 students with no more than 32 students per class. Due to the nature of the students served at DJJ, the teacher student ratio has been set at no more than 1 teacher per 17 students, on a schedule of six classes a day, totaling 102 students on average daily. Currently, the student enrollment count for the district has been averaging between 600 - 850 students (75 percent on DJJ campuses and 25 percent in private provider facilities). As shown in Table 1, there are 12 certified academic instructors (high school and / or middle school certified) as part of Birchwood faculty that provide instruction for approximately 25 students each, on a daily basis. Combined with other CATE, Pace – certified, and Electives and Associate teachers, as a whole, Birchwood faculty of 28 teachers on average provides instruction for approximately 75 – 85 students out of the total DJJ student population. Consequently, they teach approximately 15 percent of the entire district student body, while averaging a student count of between 8 – 25 students served daily per teacher, based on teacher certification level and area.

The average daily student enrollment for students in the short term Detention Center and Evaluation Centers has an approximate range of (between 80 – 90 students each), similar to that of Birchwood campus, the long term facility (approximately 85 – 100 students during peak seasons). So based on student count the detention and evaluation centers also serve approximately 15 percent each of the total district student population. Unfortunately, at the short term facilities teachers' total average daily class counts (75 -85 students) run three to ten times higher than at Birchwood campus (8 -25 students per teacher), because they have fewer educational staff, and consequently, fewer certified teachers. In essence, If CMU were included as part of the short term academic facilities along with Detention Center and Evaluation Centers, each would have an average approximately four teachers (elementary, middle or high school certified) that serve on average between 15 – 100 students daily, which accounts for approximately 350 – 450 of the roughly 400 – 600 students taught at DJJ facilities. The remaining 25 percent or approximate 150 – 250 students who make up the potential total SCDJJ student enrollment are taught at Private Provider facilities, with DJJ oversight.

It is apparent based on these numbers that along with a lack of appropriately certified teachers there also exists an inequitable distribution of those teaching resources and a disparity in the numbers of daily students served at academic facilities on DJJ premises and at those pertaining to Private Provider facilities. In order to identify potential solutions to these problems and to satisfy the requirements for the PBS agreement, SCDJJ proposed three viable solutions focusing primarily on resolving SCDJJ School District's teacher accreditation deficiencies.

The current "certified teacher needs per facility" have been identified in Table 2, along with the average student number enrolled in both middle and high school courses. Based on identified needs there are 11 facilities that need both high school math and high school science certified teachers, nine facilities that need a high school certified English teacher, and eight facilities that need a high school certified social studies teacher. One benefit of current SDE certification requirements is that high school certified teachers can teach middle school level students, although middle school certified teachers cannot teach high school classes. This is beneficial because close to 80 percent of the student population is comprised of high school level students, so by having additional high school certified faculty, the middle school students can also be served.

Table 2: Certified Teacher Needs and Student Grade Levels by Facility

Certified Teacher Needs Based on High School Student Enrollment

CAMPS	GRADE 6	GRADE 7	GRADE 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total	NEEDS	Mid. School	High School
Aspen	0	0	4	9	4	0	1	18	M/SC/SS	4	14
Beaufort Marine	0	1	1	13	4	3	2	23	M/E	2	22
Bennetsville	0	2	3	6	0	0	0	11	M/E/SC/SS	5	6
Ghigau	0	1	1	7	4	0	0	13	M/E/SC/SS	2	11
Georgetown	1	2	6	7	0	0	0	16	M/E/SC/SS	9	7
Piedmont	0	0	5	8	2	0	0	14	M/E/SC/SS	5	10
Sand Hills	0	0	1	13	7	2	0	23	M/SC	1	22
White Pines 1	1	2	5	12	4	0	0	24	SC	8	16
White Pines 2	0	1	1	8	6	0	0	16	SC	2	14
Camp Long	0	1	0	8	2	1	2	14	M/E/SC	1	13
Subtotals	2	10	27	91	33	6	5	172		39	135
EVALUATION											
CEC	2	3	11	34	19	8	0	77	M/E/SS	16	61
UEC	1	2	9	26	16	11	2	67	E/SC	12	55
MEC	2	6	14	38	15	7	0	82	M/E/SS	22	60
LONG TERM											
CMU				10	3	2	0	15	M/SC/SS		15
Subtotals	5	11	34	108	53	28	2	226		50	191
Grand Total	7	21	61	199	86	34	7	398			

The following is an overview of these three solutions proposed to address teacher certification deficiencies and other issues related to teacher instruction equity:

Option A – Edmentum EdOptions Academy (EOA) Virtual Solution

EdOptions Academy is a fee-based online program that focuses on partnering with schools to promote student academic success. It provides students with individualized online core academic instruction by SC – certified teachers through use of the Edmentum PLATO curriculum (Edmentum Proposal, 2016).

Advantages:

- Online teachers monitor student progress and provide needed academic interventions.
- Online teachers work collaboratively with site-based facilitators to ensure student is meeting academic progress goals.
- Scheduling of virtual instruction and on-site facilitator instruction supports SCDJJ's Blended Learning initiative.
- Students enjoy access to instruction and teacher access in a virtual platform.
- EOA's Guidance Counselor handles student course enrollment, student records, provides transcripts upon course completion or content mastery records upon student transfer.
- Program is NCAA – approved and offers courses for grades 6-12.
- Learner Management system provides real-time data analysis.
- Program supports dropout prevention initiatives through establishing connections with local school districts to ensure student continued enrollment in EOA even after student leaves SCDJJ.
- Fully manageable with current FTEs in place, although is able to function with fewer FTEs if necessary.
- Fully functional with current technology configurations.

Disadvantages:

- Cost - \$ 600,000.00 for all camps, payable by July 1, 2017 and renewable annually.
- Program requires continued subscription purchase to Edmentum PLATO online curriculum to maintain curriculum content continuity within academic courses offered throughout the school district.

Option B – VirtualSC Virtual Solution

VirtualSC is currently a free state-sponsored online academic program serving students in grades 7-12, who are home-schooled, or attend public or private schools. It provides students with instruction in core academic content and / or electives through various web-based textbooks and resources that make up course content.

Advantages:

- Online teachers monitor student progress and provide needed academic interventions.
- Online teachers work collaboratively with site-based facilitators to ensure student is meeting academic progress goals.
- Scheduling of virtual instruction and on-site facilitator instruction supports SCDJJ's Blended Learning initiative.
- Students enjoy access to instruction and teacher access in a virtual platform.
- Students use websites for course curriculum that they are familiar with from prior use in their public school districts.
- Students are provided with access to multiple course content websites that enhance their 21st century skills.
- VirtualSC Enrollment Counselor creates student account and passwords.
- VirtualSC teachers provide SCDJJ Guidance Counselor with student academic progress information.
- Program is SC Dept. of Education-supported for grades 7-12.
- Program supports dropout prevention initiatives through local school district sponsorship to ensure student continued enrollment in VirtualSC even after student leaves SCDJJ.
- Fully manageable with current FTEs in place through end SY 2016-2017.

Disadvantages:

- Cost - \$100 per student franchise fee for a student's complete schedule of classes using VirtualSC curriculum once trial period is over in July 2017.
- Student access to multiple websites requires a different approach to web monitoring and student web access limitations.
- White List process not realistic. If current student web access restrictions remain the same, extensive OIT hours required to unblock all needed websites and provide additional URL and web access support.
- FTE reallocation necessary if franchise model is adopted. Will need certified faculty to run franchises due to personnel limitations of SC Office of Virtual Education.

Option C – SCDJJ Virtual Education Solution (DJJVES)

SCDJJ Virtual Solution will be comprised of re-allocated current certified teacher resources to provide virtual instruction to students in facilities without a content specific certified teacher. The majority of content certified teachers are at Birchwood School, which serves the least amount of students in our district. By re-distributing content certified teachers' teaching schedules to include becoming the "DJJVES Teacher of Record" for students throughout the district in non-certified teachers' classrooms, students will be able to receive content specific

online instruction with academic assistance from content certified teachers, while also receiving on-site support from on-site facilitators.

Advantages:

- Online DJJVES teachers monitor student progress and provide needed academic interventions.
- Online teachers work collaboratively with site-based facilitators to ensure student is meeting academic progress goals.
- Scheduling of virtual instruction and on-site facilitator instruction supports SCDJJ's Blended Learning initiative.
- Students enjoy access to instruction and teacher access in a virtual platform.
- Curriculum used can be either current subscription-based Edmentum PLATO curriculum or any other online curriculum adopted as standard curriculum for the district.
- DJJVS supports state and local dropout prevention initiatives by providing the same virtual teacher for students as they move from one facility to the next, ensuring continuity of instruction, academic intervention and support of Individual Graduation Plan.
- Technology infrastructure is already in place with current online curriculum, curriculum frameworks aligned to online curriculum and state standards, access to additional instructional websites, and District Strategic Goal of providing individualized instruction through a Blended Learning platform.
- DJJVES will maximize use of current certified teacher resources throughout the district.
- Diploma – track and GED – track instruction can be clearly defined and supported through additional GED instruction monitoring by using CATE teachers to provide additional instructional support.

Disadvantages:

- Additional FTEs needed in addition to the re-allocation of current certified teaching faculty in order to keep numbers of daily students served by each teacher below 150.
- Re-allocation of teacher resources and student schedules requires a highly qualified Guidance Counselor adept at using Student Information Systems technologies to provide flexible course scheduling.
- Teachers' student count will increase to those resembling regular public school districts, however, at least half of those will be for monitoring progress and providing academic interventions only.
- CATE teachers' student count will increase if they are used in monitoring GED – based instruction for students on GED track.
- The SCDJJ academic instruction delivery model will shift.

By re-allocating current educational staff and shifting the way the district delivers academic instruction three key outcomes will result.

1. All students, to include those at CMU or in any other alternative educational setting will have access to academic instruction being monitored by content certified teachers.
2. Students have the opportunity to receive closely monitored in-depth instruction focusing on whichever academic track they chose to follow: Diploma or GED.
3. All educational faculty human resources will be better utilized providing greater workload equity among all teachers, regardless of their work location or whether they are academic or CATE.

However, due to the additional students that each of Birchwood School’s high school certified teachers would need to acquire in order to re-distribute human resources throughout the district in a virtual platform, option C proved to be unrealistic (see Table 3). Numbers of students per grade levels were derived from Table 2 totals.

Table 3: Certified Teachers Additional Teaching Assignments as Related To District Certification Needs

Distribution of Additional Students Potentially Assigned to Birchwood Teachers in Option C

Birchwood Certified Teachers	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Totals	Additional Students Each
3 English	199	86	34	7	398	133
2 Math	199	86	34	7	398	199
3 Science	199	86	34	7	398	133
3 Soc. Studies	199	86	34	7	398	133

Data Analysis

Due to the lack of sufficiently certified content area specific personnel, and the inequitable student distribution throughout facilities, overcoming certification deficiencies allowed for only one viable solution. Option A – Edmentum EdOptions Academy Virtual Solution was selected over Options B – VirtualSC Virtual Solution, and Option C – SCDJJ Virtual Education Solution (DJJVES), after evaluating the results of two pilot programs using either Option A or B within four educational facilities.

By enlisting the aid of EOA, the school district was able to increase the teacher certification levels from one certified teacher in two facilities to four certified teachers (one for each content area), who provided instruction for all of the students in both facilities. Student engagement increased dramatically, students were instructed using grade-level, SC standards-based content, and students' average grades per subject averaged between 91% at one facility and 97% at the other. In essence, students' academic achievement as well as desire for learning dramatically increased. Prior to this time, students at these two facilities had a high failure rate.

Based on such academic gains and the commitment of DJJ to partner with EOA, a collaborative approach to full implementation was initiated with the goal of starting the August 2017 school year with a new SCDJJ Virtual Education Solution platform. The new DJJVES will thereby provide all students with an online curriculum presented by content-specific, SC certified teachers, on-site certified Special Education teachers and additional professional educators functioning as classroom facilitators, some of which are also SC certified. In essence, students will benefit from at least three professionally-trained and / or certified teachers that will provide academic instruction, assistance and interventions. For students, the DJJVES will become a platform that provides them with the most academic assistance and individualized instruction.

Implementation Plan

In order to ensure that all educational facilities will be able to become fully integrated into the SCDJJ Virtual Education Solution (DJJVES) platform, schools will need to have at minimum four teachers, preferably secondary content area certified, who will function as classroom facilitators for their specific site. Course content will be delivered through a web-based curriculum and the SC certified, content area specific teachers will become the students' teachers of record and primary provider of instruction. Students' instructional levels will be identified as one of three groups, based on how well students can work independently (see appendix – Instructional Tiers). Teachers, both virtual and on-site will provide academic interventions accordingly. Special Education teachers will likewise work closely with both classroom and virtual teachers to ensure Special Education students receive appropriate instruction in accordance to their Individualized Education Plans in an inclusion setting. Having approximately three teachers available collaborating and even team-teaching in the classroom, will provide students in DJJVES with the most individualized instructional platform in the state.

As with any new project, informational meetings with all stakeholders have taken place and various implementation checklists have been created in order to address the many needs that such a shift in educational delivery requires. In order to promote an effective implementation process, implementation specialists for both SCDJJ and the virtual education contractor have been identified to create the necessary policies and procedures, as well as to provide training for both organizations' personnel. Likewise, a compliance monitor has been identified to ensure that once DJJVES is implemented, all established protocols are followed and maintained.

Additional facilities have been identified to be next in the implementation process, which will continue to expand the previously initiated pilot program. The desire is to add two facilities every other month, allowing for all 12 academic sites to be fully implemented into DJJVES by July 1, 2017, ultimately, ensuring 100 percent SDE teacher certification compliance and validating each Carnegie Unit earned by students in our district.

Evaluation and Recommendations

The success of the DJJVES platform will be observed in these specific areas:

- Student academic growth data – to include numbers of Carnegie Units earned and End of Course (EOC) pass rate improvement.
- Greater student academic engagement – to be determined by fewer numbers of students being sent out of class for disruptive activity.
- An effective collaboration system between all classroom teachers providing students with multiple academic intervention opportunities, as needed.
- Better utilization of SCDJJ teaching resources to provide students with more effective individualized instruction.
- Complete compliance with SDE teacher certification requirements.
- Ease of transition for student re-enrollment into their home public school academic programs.

In order to truly provide the kind of individualized instruction necessary for students in the 21st century, academic facilities need to be flexible enough to provide academic instruction on multiple platforms. By embracing the DJJVES and methodically training both faculty and students, both will soon appreciate how DJJVES can become their vehicle for academic success. Compliance monitoring will be a key factor in promoting said success by ensuring that the platform supports flexibility, while maintaining its integrity. As students find success through DJJVES, another platform can be added to promote post-secondary instruction through virtual instruction partnerships with local community colleges and universities. The SC Virtual Education Solution is a platform that will solve far more instructional delivery challenges than have been addressed in this analysis. It is truly a positive change that will promote the academic success of students at SCDJJ.

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Appendix

SCDJJ Instructional Levels

Students entering Detention or Evaluation Centers will be initially assessed through the STAR Test screening process within their first 48 hours of arrival. Once students' academic status is ascertained, students will take diagnostic prescriptive assessments using the Edmentum Accucess program.

All subsequent academic instruction will be in support of the academic prescription produced as a result of students' Accucess assessments. Students will continue work on Accucess Academic Prescription until school records have been received, evaluated and class schedule created.

If a student is classified as "General Sessions" status while at Detention Center, student will be enrolled into DJJVES platform, pending approval by Lead teacher and evaluation of academic records.

Levels of instructional support will be determined by students' IEPs, STAR and / or Accucess Diagnostic results.

TIER III

- Students fall well below expected level of accomplishment or benchmarks and lack foundational academic skills.
- Students identified as those receiving Tier III instruction will have scored at three or more grade levels below confirmed grade level resulting from both STAR and Accucess Diagnostic assessments.
- Any SPED student on non-diploma track or who likewise, scores three or more grade levels below.

- ✓ In the classroom, Tier III students will be given the most teacher instructional support to promote academic growth.
- ✓ Teachers will provide small group instruction with necessary accommodations to help students' meet their daily learning objectives.
- ✓ Daily collaboration with SPED teacher will be required.
- ✓ Additional academic interventions and collaboration with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher will promote achievement of students' academic growth goals.
- ✓ Teacher will maintain a communications log to track all communications with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher.

TIER II

- Students who fall below expected levels of accomplishment or benchmarks and are at risk of failure.
- Students identified as those receiving Tier II instruction will have scored at two to three grade levels below confirmed grade level resulting from both STAR and Accucess Diagnostic assessments.

- ✓ In the classroom, Tier II students will be given adequate teacher instructional support to promote academic growth.

- ✓ Teachers will provide appropriate direct instruction with necessary accommodations to help students' meet their daily learning objectives.
- ✓ Collaboration with SPED teacher will be required as student progress is monitored.
- ✓ Academic interventions and collaboration with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher will promote achievement of students' academic growth goals.
- ✓ Teachers will ensure students' completion of offline instructional activities and provide SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher with assignment grades.
- ✓ Teachers will ensure students meet curriculum pacing guidelines.
- ✓ Teacher will maintain a communications log to track all communications with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher.

TIER I

- Students who meet expected levels of accomplishments or benchmarks and who can work independently a majority of instructional time.
- Students identified as those receiving Tier I instruction will have scored on grade level or are no more than one grade level below confirmed grade level resulting from both STAR and Accucess Diagnostic assessments.
- ✓ In the classroom, Tier I students will require minimal teacher instructional support to promote academic growth.
- ✓ Teachers will provide appropriate direct instruction with necessary accommodations to help students' meet their daily learning objectives.
- ✓ Collaboration with SPED teacher will be required as student progress is monitored.
- ✓ Academic interventions and collaboration with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher will promote achievement of students' academic growth goals.
- ✓ Teachers will ensure students' completion of offline instructional activities and provide SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher with assignment grades.
- ✓ Teachers will ensure students meet curriculum pacing guidelines.
- ✓ Teachers may collaborate with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher to promote students' course acceleration as needed.
- ✓ Teacher will maintain a communications log to track all communications with SCDJJ Virtual Education teacher.

