

REACHING THE UNREACHABLE: A WRITING PROGRAM IN A JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

SUE CORBIN, PH.D., NOTRE DAME COLLEGE



STATISTICS (PRISONPOLICY.ORG)

- **2/3 OF INCARCERATED YOUTHS ARE HELD IN HIGHLY RESTRICTIVE FACILITIES**
- **2/3 OF INCARCERATED YOUTHS ARE HELD FOR LONGER THAN ONE MONTH**
- **40% OF LONG-TERM FACILITIES ISOLATE YOUTHS IN LOCKED ROOMS FOR 4 HOURS OR MORE**
- **DAILY, IN THE UNITED STATES, OVER 48,000 YOUTHS ARE HELD IN FACILITIES RANGING FROM GROUP HOMES, RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTERS, ADULT PRISONS AND JAILS, DETENTION CENTERS, AND LONG-TERM SECURE FACILITIES. A FEW ARE HELD IN SHELTERS, RECEPTION/DIAGNOSTIC CENTERS, BOOT CAMPS AND RANCH/WILDERNESS CAMPS**

WHO IS INCARCERATED

- **32% HISPANIC**
- **30% BLACK**
- **26% NATIVE AMERICAN/INDIGENOUS**
- **25% ASIAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN, PACIFIC ISLANDER**
- **21% WHITE**

WHY ARE THEY INCARCERATED?

- **TRUANCY**
- **RUNNING AWAY**
- **VIOLATING CURFEW**
- **DEEMED “UNGOVERNABLE”**
- **DRUGS**
- **THEFT**
- **RAPE**
- **MURDER**

LIFE BEHIND THE WALL

- **YOUTHS ARE AT RISK FOR SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION, USE OF MECHANICAL RESTRAINTS, BULLYING AND ATTACKS BY OTHER PRISONERS, UNNECESSARY USE OF FORCE BY STAFF**
- **POOR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS**
 - **FEW OR NO PROVISIONS FOR IEPs OR 504 PLANS**
 - **LITTLE OR NO GED TRAINING**
 - **LITTLE OR NO JOB TRAINING**

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

- **SOME FACILITIES HAVE ILL-STOCKED LIBRARIES**
- **SOME STATES PROVIDE TEACHERS, OTHERS SIMPLY SUPPLY STAFF MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT LICENSED EDUCATORS**
- **MOST FACILITIES LACK UPDATED TEXTBOOKS, SCIENCE EQUIPMENT, OR TECHNOLOGY**
- **MOST CLASSES ARE SEPARATED BY AGE INSTEAD OF GRADE**

THE CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

- **STANDARDS ARE SUGGESTED BUT INCONSISTENTLY FOLLOWED**
- **[HTTPS://CEANATIONAL.ORG/SITES/CEANATIONAL/UPLOADS/STANDARDS-COMMISSION/CEA-STANDARDS-2016-REVISED.PDF?CFID=8F799A32-F6CC-47B0-89EA-EB675EA03A99&CFTOKEN=0](https://ceanational.org/sites/ceanational/uploads/standards-commission/cea-standards-2016-revised.pdf?CFID=8F799A32-F6CC-47B0-89EA-EB675EA03A99&CFTOKEN=0)**

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE

- **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND STATE INITIATIVES TO REDUCE EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE PRACTICES IN K12 SCHOOLS**
 - [HTTPS://WWW2.ED.GOV/POLICY/GEN/GUID/SCHOOL-DISCIPLINE/INDEX.HTML](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html)
 - [HTTPS://SAFESUPPORTIVELEARNING.ED.GOV/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/DISCIPLINE-COMPENDIUM/OHIO%20SCHOOL%20DISCIPLINE%20LAWS%20AND%20REGULATIONS.PDF](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/discipline-compendium/ohio%20school%20discipline%20laws%20and%20regulations.pdf)
- **POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORTS TRAINING**
 - [NATIONAL EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE NEGLECTED, DELINQUENT OR AT RISK \(NDTAC\)](#)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OHIO

- **THE BUCKEYE UNITED SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVES AROUND 1100 STUDENTS IN 3 FACILITIES (INDIAN RIVER, CIRCLEVILLE, AND CUYAHOGA HILLS)**
- **THE SYSTEM IS PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES THAT OVERSEES THESE AND OTHER DETENTION FACILITIES**
- **CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES ARE ACCREDITED BY THE AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION WITH MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULA, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES, RECREATION, RELIGIOUS SERVICES, COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES, AND REENTRY PROGRAMS**

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE

- **MISSION STATEMENT: WE STRIVE TO REDUCE THE RATE OF RECIDIVISM WITHIN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM BY FACILITATING AN OPEN FORUM FOR ARTISTIC SELF-EXPRESSION AND CONSTRUCTIVE SELF-REFLECTION WHILE ALSO FOSTERING GENUINE, LASTING RELATIONSHIPS**
- **FOUNDED BY ZACHARY THOMAS OF JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY**
- **[FACEBOOK.COM/WRITERSINRESIDENCE](https://www.facebook.com/writersinresidence)**

CUYAHOGA HILLS PROGRAM

- **MY INVOLVEMENT – TO COLLECT INFORMATION CONCERNING THE YOUTHS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARD READING AND TO ESTABLISH A BASELINE FOR THEIR READING SKILLS**
- **I USED THE DISPOSITION SCHEDULE THAT I DEVELOPED IN MY DOCTORAL RESEARCH (MISHEFF, 1989) AND THE QUALITATIVE READING INVENTORY-6**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **I FOCUSED ON FOUR YOUTHS - ONE HISPANIC, ONE AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND TWO WHITE**
- **THREE OF THE YOUTHS WERE STRUGGLING TO GET THROUGH THEIR STUDIES ON THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL**
- **ONE HAD ALREADY STARTED COLLEGE CREDIT PLUS COURSES**
- **ALL YOUTHS INCREASED THEIR READING LEVELS AFTER ONE YEAR IN THE WRITERS IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM**
- **ALL INCREASED THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SELF-EFFICACY AS READERS AND WRITERS**

DISPOSITIONS

- **THREE YOUTHS THINK OF THEMSELVES AS GOOD READERS; ONE SAID THAT HE GETS NERVOUS READING ALOUD**
- **THEY ALL REPORTED THAT THEY ENJOY READING**
- **EACH ONE REPORTED NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES READING IN SCHOOL**
- **EACH USES METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES TO COMPREHEND TEXT (STOP AND REFLECT, STOP TO SUMMARIZE, “THINK OF THINGS” WHILE READING, USE CONTEXT CLUES, USE OUTSIDE RESOURCES, REREAD, TAKE NOTES) THAT THEY REPORT HAVING LEARNED ON THEIR OWN**

- **NOT ONE OF THE YOUTHS HAD BEEN READ TO AS A CHILD**

- **AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM, THE YOUTHS REPORTED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AS READERS:**
 - **“I READ MORE AND ANALYZE WHAT I READ MORE CAREFULLY. I LOOK FOR SPECIFIC CONCEPTS AND ASK ‘WHY’ QUESTIONS AS I READ IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TEXT.”**
 - **“I UNDERSTAND MORE WORDS NOW AND I’M MORE WILLING TO ASK FOR HELP WHEN I COME TO SOMETHING IN THE TEXT THAT I DON’T KNOW.”**
 - **“WRITING HAS HELPED ME LEARN TO BREAK WORDS INTO CHUNKS WHEN I DON’T KNOW THE WORD OR DON’T KNOW HOW TO SPELL IT.”**
 - **“I THINK MORE NOW AND I READ MORE, SO I’M A BETTER READER.”**

QRI-6 RESULTS

- **EACH YOUTH WAS ABLE TO COMPREHEND ON HIGHER LEVELS WHEN THEY ENGAGED IN THE THINK-ALOUD PORTION OF THE ASSESSMENT. STOPPING TO THINK AND SUMMARIZE AS WELL AS TO MAKE PREDICTIONS HELPED THEM TO CALL ON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE, MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS, AND ASK QUESTIONS AS THEY READ.**
- **NOT ONE OF THE YOUTHS COULD READ A LIST OF WORDS ON THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL INDEPENDENTLY IN THE BEGINNING. THEY HAD BASIC PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS BUT STRUGGLED WITH MULTISYLLABIC WORDS AND WORDS WITH AFFIXES AND ROOTS.**

- **WITHOUT ENGAGING IN THE THINK-ALOUD STRATEGY, NONE OF THE YOUTHS COULD READ INDEPENDENTLY ON THE UPPER MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL IN THE BEGINNING.**
- **BY THE END OF THE PROGRAM, THREE OF THE YOUTHS COULD READ THE HIGH SCHOOL PASSAGE ON AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL WITHOUT THE THINK-ALOUD, AND COULD FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY WITH THE THINK-ALOUD STRATEGY.**
- **ONE YOUTH WAS ABLE TO READ AT THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL ON THE HIGH SCHOOL PASSAGE WITH THE THINK-ALOUD STRATEGY.**

WRITING DISPOSITIONS

- **THE WRITING DISPOSITIONS SCALE (PIAZZA & SIEBERT, 2010) WAS USED TO MEASURE CHANGES IN CONFIDENCE, PERSISTENCE, AND PASSION TOWARD WRITING.**
- **FOR EACH YOUTH, THERE WERE POSITIVE CHANGES IN EACH DOMAIN.**

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

- **HOW MUCH DOES THE INCREASED READING TIME FOR INCARCERATED YOUTHS IMPACT THEIR READING AND WRITING SKILLS AND DISPOSITIONS?**
- **WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF EARLY READING EXPERIENCES ON INCARCERATED YOUTHS' LITERACY SKILLS AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING?**
- **DO ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS AND PBIS REDUCE THE NUMBER OF INCARCERATED YOUTHS?**
- **WHAT ARE BEST PRACTICES FOR LITERACY INTERVENTION FOR INCARCERATED YOUTHS?**
- **DO LITERACY PROGRAMS (INCLUDING READING, WRITING, SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND VIEWING) REDUCE THE RECIDIVISM RATE?**
- **WHAT SYSTEMIC CHANGES NEED TO HAPPEN TO PREVENT DELINQUENCY AND INCARCERATION, AND REDUCE RECIDIVISM?**

WOKE UP BY TEVIN

**I WOKE UP TO THE FACT THAT
I AM A NEW MAN THAT
I HAVE A NEW MIND AND EVERYTHING
INSIDE FEELS BRAND NEW OLDER
IN A WAY BUT IN OTHERS EVERYTHING IS
THE SAME I WALK THESE HALLS
LEAVE THE CHILDISH FIGHTS IN MY
WAKE ALL BECAUSE I NOW HAVE
LEARNED THAT MOST THINGS IN**

**THIS PLACE ARE TRULY FAKE PLASTIC
STUCK IN PLACE LIKE LITTLE PAWNS
IN A BIG A*S GAME PLAYED
BY THIS SYSTEM THE PUPPETS TO
THE MAN AND ALL OF THE PEOPLE
HERE ARE HIS FANS HIS SMILE IS
FAKE PAINTED ON A PORCELAIN VASE
I HAVE TO REALIZE THAT I'M
STUCK HERE 'TIL I WALK
THROUGH THOSE GATES AND SEE
MY FATHER'S FACE FINALLY FREE**

PIECES AND LOVE IS EVIL BY DALTON

PIECES BROKEN

APART THEY HOLD THEIR OWN STORY

TO EACH THEIR OWN

TOGETHER THEY FORM

WHAT YOU SEE TODAY

LOOK CLOSELY

AND YOU'LL SEE

ME.

LOVE IS EVIL SPELL IT BACKWARDS

NO HAND IS GIVEN ONLY TAKEN

BROKEN GLASS INSIDE ME HIDE ME

PROMISES MADE FALSE WORDS REMAIN TRUE

LOST AND BROKEN WORDS UNSPOKEN NEEDED

FRIENDS WILL GO I WILL STAY

BEAUTIFULLY PAINFUL BY KALEB

SHADOWS IN THE DARK

CREEPING UP SILENTLY NOW

TO TAKE ME AWAY

WASTING MY LIFE NOW

JUST TRYING TO FIND MYSELF

SEARCHING FOR NOTHING

BEAUTIFUL GREY EYES

BROWN HAIR CANNOT HELP BUT STARE

SOUNDS WEIRD BUT IT'S TRUE

FALL FOLIAGE FALLING

INDESCRIBABLE TO ME

BEAUTIFUL AS EVER

HALLOWEEN SPOOKY

OCTOBER MONSTERS SHOWING

BIG JACK-O-LANTERN

LOWER THAN BEFORE

CANNOT HELP BUT BE LONELY

MOMMA IT'S OKAY

LOST AND WASTED TIME BY JONATHON

IS IT UP OR IS IT DOWN?

IS IT LEFT OR IS IT RIGHT?

I LOOK AROUND WITH A FROWN

I SEEM TO BE LOST TONIGHT

I SIT AND WATCH THE OLD CLOCK

AS IT SLOWLY TICKS AWAY

MY TIME HERE IS ALMOST UP

AND I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SAY

SADDENED BY DONTAY

I DON'T BELONG, LIKE A BODY SIX FEET UNDER I'M GONE...

MY HEART IS CRAVING DEATH FOR HUNGER...

MY BODY IS ACHING WITH PAIN ALL OVER...

PEOPLE GRAVE AND LEFT LIKE SOLDIERS...

BABY IN MY ARMS, IN MY HEART YEAH I'M HOLDING HER...

YOU EVER SUNG A SONG IN THE DARK LIKE A CRAZED PRISONER...

IN THE BOX...

CAGED LIKE AN ANIMAL...

MY MIND BLOCKED LIKE A TILE ON THE WALL...

I'M STARTING TO FALL...

TIRED OF STANDING TALL...

TRAPPED BEHIND THESE WALLS...

DON'T WANNA BE ALIVE...AT...ALL...AT...ALL...

THEY GAVE UP ON ME...

PROMISE TO NEVER LEAVE ME LONELY...

THIS AIN'T MUSIC...THIS AIN'T SONY...

MY PAIN IS REAL...

MY LIFE AIN'T' PHONY...

DANGEROUS AND MADDENED...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?...OH...

JUST SADDENED.

WORTH IT

- **WHO ARE THESE BOYS?**
- **WHAT DO THEY NEED?**
- **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

