



WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Schools in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

January 31, 2013

Honorable Members of the 83rd Legislature:

The Windham School District (WSD) is pleased to present *Evaluation of the Windham School District Correctional Education Programs*, a report which presents findings from a collaborative effort between researchers from Sam Houston State University and Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Research focused on recidivism as it relates to literacy levels and wage earnings for offenders who participated in WSD programs.

This report is in response to the General Appropriations Act, H.B. 1, Article III – 7, Rider 6 from the Eighty-second Legislature. Rider 6 stipulated that for students who successfully complete the district's program during the 2010-2011 biennium, the WSD shall report to the Eighty-third Legislature on the following: recidivism, employment rates, and attainment of GEDs, high school diplomas, professional certifications, associate's degrees and adult education literacy levels.

The WSD publishes and disseminates an Annual Performance Report each year with information relevant to each of these topics with the exception of recidivism. A report to the Eighty-third Legislature on participating students of the 2010-2011 biennium was not possible because a minimum of two years post-release is required to measure recidivism. However, to be responsive to the Legislature and in light of questions asked during the Sunset process, the WSD contracted for an initial report to evaluate the effectiveness of correctional education.

There were many lessons learned as a result of this initial report which will help guide and expand future studies. Future studies will include an evaluation of the CHANGES II curriculum and district efficacy in meeting other legislative goals in addition to recidivism and employment. Additionally, future research will compare differences in delivery modes on effectiveness such as the impact of consecutive or concurrent enrollment and the differences between offenders exposed to a single correctional education class with those exposed to multiple classes. Moreover, ongoing research will inform program implementation and provide support for continuous district improvement.

Thank you for taking the time to review this study. Please let us know if there is any other information that we can provide.

Veronica Casanova
Interim Superintendent

Superintendent Executive Summary of Significant Findings
Evaluation of the Windham School District Correctional Education Programs (2012)

The Windham School District (WSD) provides educational services to the eligible offender population within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Approximately 63,000 offenders participated in services during the 2011-2012 school year. As confirmed in the evaluation, the WSD primarily serves offenders with high risk characteristics for recidivism such as less than 35 years of age, lower educational achievement levels, more than one incarcerations and lengthy incarceration.

Recidivism:

- ✓ Each WSD program demonstrated that higher levels of program hours decreased the likelihood of offender re-incarceration. (pages 57-58)
- ✓ Increased participation in WSD academic programs as defined by the report resulted in 5-15% less likelihood of offender re-incarceration. Similarly, a high level of college participation resulted in a 52% less likelihood in re-incarceration. (page 58)
- ✓ WSD and college vocational training participants who completed vocational hours equal to that required for a vocational certificate were 18-27% less likely to return to prison as compared to offenders who completed fewer hours. (page 58)
- ✓ WSD participants who completed the CIP were 16% less likely to return to prison as compared to offenders who did not complete. (page 58)
- ✓ In line with other research, offenders less than 35 years of age were significantly more likely to re-offend as compared to offenders 35 or older; however, within both age groups, improved educational achievement of WSD participants reduced recidivism. (page 54)
- ✓ Increasing educational achievement levels for WSD participants in the 17-25 age group lowered recidivism by 15% with an approximate 8% reduction in the 26-30 and 31-35 age groups. (pages 53-54)

Employment:

- ✓ WSD participants who had a higher level of reading ability were more likely to be employed. (page 60)

Superintendent Executive Summary of Significant Findings
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- ✓ On average, WSD participants earned higher wages as compared to non-WSD offenders. (page 60)
- ✓ WSD offenders who completed a vocational program earned higher wages than offenders who did not complete a vocational program. (page 59)
- ✓ WSD offenders who completed the Cognitive Intervention Program (CIP) earned significantly higher wages as compared to non-CIP participants. (page 60)

Student Achievement:

- ✓ Offenders released during FY 2009, who participated in WSD literacy programming, were functioning at a significantly higher level in reading, math and language than offenders who did not participate in WSD programs. (page 48)
- ✓ The report noted that district services are targeted to those identified with the greatest academic need. WSD offenders who began incarceration with lower reading scores made the largest gains in reading with an average of a 2.5 grade level improvement. Furthermore, WSD participants who received the highest number of hours of instruction demonstrated the highest level of gain. (page 51)
- ✓ More than 20% of releasing offenders moved up from non-reader/reader categories to literate or advanced reader categories. (page 49)
- ✓ After reviewing offenders incarcerated for less than a year, the report noted that WSD participants could make significant gains in reading ability in 4-6 months, to include offenders at the very lowest reading levels. (page 52)