Improving Outcomes for Adjudicated Youth through Special Education Behind the Fence

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by

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Abstract

This dissertation is composed of three manuscripts, each of which addresses issues facing youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system. The manuscripts are ordered from the broadest topic to the most specific with each preceding study informing the next. The first manuscript was a qualitative examination of a special educator's process for overcoming systemic issues that often plague the juvenile justice system and prevent adjudicated students with disabilities from receiving services. Among the issues faced were record transfer failures and communicative breakdowns within the facility and between the facility, schools, and families. Each of these issues had implications for transition, which is the focus of the second manuscript. The second manuscript is a systematic review of the literature on transition services for youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system. Although few studies were identified for the review, a foundation for evidence-supported practices was established. Among these practices included helping youth offenders earn a diploma prior to their release into the community. Based on this finding, the final study was an examination of a writing intervention and its efficacy on the GED writing subtest for adjudicated students with and without disabilities who were identified as high-risk for school drop-out. All four students demonstrated mastery of the strategy and made gains on the GED writing subtest. Implications for research and practice are described.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation, "Improving Outcomes for Adjudicated Youth through Special Education Behind the Fence," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

To the children and adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system: May you see in yourself the capacity for greatness – and should you need help finding your way, may your teachers guide you there.

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I am eternally grateful to the "Pinewood Juvenile Detention Center" for being an exemplar of what education in the juvenile justice system could be, and for being transparent in the struggles they continued to face. Words cannot adequately capture my sentiment towards the students at PJDC. These young individuals have demonstrated a level of grit and determinacy that few others could muster at will. They have taught me more than I could ever hope to learn about life in the justice system and beyond.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends. To my parents, your faith in me has been unyielding - without which this dream would not have become a reality. Thank you also to Nick, Aly, and Abi whose patience, kindness, and encouragement kept me afloat.

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CHAPTER I

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ADJUDICATED YOUTH THROUGH SPECIAL EDUCATION BEHIND THE FENCE: LINKING DOCUMENT

Improving Outcomes for Adjudicated Youth through Special Education Behind the Fence: Dissertation Linking Document

In their seminal study of over 500 youths exiting the juvenile justice system, Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, and Havel (2002) found that only 25% of individuals returned to school and even fewer earned traditional diplomas or General Education Diplomas (GEDs). More recent data show that roughly two-thirds of adjudicated youth do not return to school after their release from the juvenile justice system (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009) and less than 20% ultimately earn any kind of high school diploma in their lifetime (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Youth who drop out of school are three times more likely to recidivate (i.e., face re-arrest) and to be incarcerated as adults (Farn & Adams, 2016). They also experience great difficulty becoming financially stable (Suitts, Dunn, & Sabree, 2014).

A substantial proportion (between 30-70%) of adjudicated youth in juvenile justice facilities have academic-related disabilities (Mallett, 2009; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirer, 2005), which places them at a considerable risk for drop-out even before factoring in adjudication (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012). The most common disability designations represented in the justice system are emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), learning disabilities (LD), and intellectual disabilities (ID; Mallett, 2009; Pyle, Flower, Fall, & Williams, 2016; Quinn et al., 2005). Further, in their review of characteristics of adjudicated youth, Pyle and colleagues (2016) uncovered multiple studies that reported that incarcerated youth were several years behind in school as compared to their same-age non-adjudicated peers. For these

reasons, education "behind the fence" is all the more important for adjudicated youth with disabilities.

Despite serving such a high-needs population, general academic and special education programming in juvenile justice facilities is often insufficient. The Council for State Governments (CSG) Justice Center (2015) surveyed state juvenile justice personnel to gauge the status of these affairs and the findings were objectionable. Only 23 states required schools in juvenile justice facilities to participate in state education accountability and national accreditation processes. In 20 states, no single facility school met national accreditation standards whatsoever. Moreover, only eight states reported offering educational and vocational programming to adjudicated students equivalent to that of non-adjudicated students in traditional public schools.

Leone and Wruble (2015) also note that youth in corrections are further restricted from receiving educational programming and special education services due to the use of isolation as punishment. Under these circumstances "students often fail to receive education services and supports to which they are entitled" (p. 591) even if they are available in the facility school. Students with EBD run the highest risk of encountering such issues (Leone, Zaremba, Chapin, & Iseli, 1995). It is perhaps unsurprising that Bullis and colleagues (2002) found that youth with disabilities exiting the juvenile justice system were almost three times more likely to recidivate within six months of their release compared to their peers without disabilities.

Manuscripts

Considering the prevalence of youth with disabilities who are incarcerated and the bleak outcomes many experience, understanding and improving special education within

the juvenile justice system is vital. Unfortunately, this area tends to be undervalued by society (Geib, Chapman, D'Amaddio, & Grigorenko, 2011; Nelson, Jolivette, Leone, & Mathur, 2010) and understudied by researchers. The three manuscripts described hereafter (See Table 1) are designed to add to the limited knowledge we have of how to best serve the nation's most vulnerable students. Each manuscript examines a specific component of special education within the juvenile justice system, including: the navigation of systemic impediments necessary to implementing services; a systematic review of existing transition interventions; and the assessment of an academic intervention designed to help students earn GEDs.

Table 1
Included Manuscripts

Manuscript number	Title	Candidate's role	Status
1	Navigating Barriers to Special Education in a Juvenile Detention Center	First author	Submitted to the *Journal of Correctional Education*
2	Reducing Recidivism: Transition Practices for Adjudicated Youth with Disabilities	First author	Submitted to *Education & Treatment of Children*
3	Examining the Efficacy of a Writing Intervention with Adjudicated Youth Working Towards a GED	First author	In preparation

First Manuscript

There have been a plethora of lawsuits in recent years that have emerged due to the noncompliance of juvenile corrections with regard to provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) including child find, individualized

education plans (IEPs), least restrictive environment (LRE), and transition services (Gagnon, Steinberg, Crockett, Murphy, & Gaddis, 2013). Despite the many outcomes of these litigations which favor the plaintiffs, Leone and Wruble (2015) found that states often fail to establish and sustain the reforms that are legally mandated as a result of such cases. Systemic issues regarding special education adherence in the juvenile justice system are well-documented, including those related to child-find procedures (Leone, Meisel, & Drakeford, 2002), record transfer (Leone & Cutting, 2004; Suitts et al., 2014), LRE (Leone & Wruble, 2015; Mallett, 2009), and staff knowledge of IEPs (Mathur & Griller Clark, 2013; Suitts et al., 2014). However, what remains largely unknown is how these issues can be combatted from within the justice system – rather than through the addition of more legislation.

The purpose of the first manuscript was to use qualitative case study methods to examine how a special educator at a juvenile detention center navigated issues related to special education compliance. The research questions that guided this study were (a) What are the underlying processes that need to occur to implement special education services and adhere to IDEA (2004) regulations in a juvenile detention center? and (b) How do relationships within a detention center and between the center and outside agents (e.g., local education agencies) associate with adherence to IDEA and special education services?

I conducted the study through 20 hours of direct observation, three interviews, and document review in order to triangulate and challenge findings. During data collection, I wrote analytic memos and engaged in inductive open-coding to develop preliminary themes. After the completion of data collection, provisional coding served to

compare and further tie evidence back to the literature base on systemic issues. I ultimately developed three assertions based on the role of relationships in combating issues of noncompliance. These assertions are:

1. Communication: The special education coordinator must set clear expectations and facilitate communication among all parties in the detention center to ensure awareness of IEPs.
2. Rapport: Strong relationships within the detention center contribute to the success of relationships between the center and outside agents.; and
3. Reciprocity: The ability to implement IEPs is reliant on relationships between the detention center and outside agents. These relationships often center on trust and the control of and access to information.

I was the sole author of this manuscript, which was submitted to the *Journal of Correctional Education*.

Second Manuscript

According to a survey conducted by the CSG Justice Center (2015), nearly half of states in the U.S. reported that "no single government agency is responsible for ensuring that incarcerated youth transition successfully to an educational or vocational setting" (p. 11). Additionally, juvenile justice facilities in only 20 states reportedly follow up with students regarding reenrollment in public school after their release, and roughly only one quarter of states report that their justice facilities examine outcome data to assess if students with special needs are gaining appropriate academic and employment skills necessary to their transition (CSG Justice Center, 2015).

Transition coordination is among the most highly overlooked aspects of IEPs and special education programming in the juvenile justice system, despite mandates that all individuals with disabilities aged 14 and older must have coursework-related transition goals and individuals 16 and older must have goals related to postsecondary school and/or employment included in their IEPs (Leone et al., 2002). IDEA (34 CFR §300) states that transition services should be results-oriented with an emphasis on postsecondary, vocational, and continuing education in addition to independent living, life skills, and employment components. Despite this, there is minimal information regarding best practices for transitioning adjudicated youth with disabilities back into their schools and communities.

The second manuscript is a synthesis of the juvenile justice transition literature spanning 30 years. Specifically, we conducted a review of transition interventions that were employed with adjudicated youth with disabilities. The purpose of this review was to begin to identify best practice as it relates to recidivism and community engagement (i.e., post-release involvement in prosocial activities related to employment, education, and support services). This investigation was driven by the following research questions: (a) What populations of individuals with disabilities are represented in transition practices?; (b) What practices have been studied in juvenile detention and/or correctional facilities that assist in transitioning youth with disabilities back into their communities?; (c) Which practices are associated with lowering rates of recidivism?; and (d) Which practices are associated with increased community engagement?

A total of seven studies were identified for inclusion after conducting an extensive search. The total number of participants amounted to 1,152 adjudicated youths across the

studies. Disability populations represented across study samples were individuals described as having EBD and/or LD (n=401), psychiatric diagnoses (n=294), comorbid psychiatric and EBD or LD diagnoses (n=189), "other" disabilities (n=116), or were at high-risk for LD (n=152). Three common overarching practices were identified and examined based on their relationship to participant outcomes for recidivism and/or community engagement, depending on the dependent variables used in each study: the use of transition specialists (*n*=6), academic and/or vocational programming (*n*=3), and mental health services (*n*=2). Studies that employed multiple practices were double-counted (*n*=4). Components of interventions were compared to determine which factors were the most influential on youth outcomes. I was the first author of the manuscript, which is under a second review iteration with *Education and Treatment of Children*.

Third Manuscript

In her study examining data for over 4,000 adjudicated youth, Cavendish (2014) found that only 9% of the sample earned a diploma of any kind during their time in secure custody. Of those individuals who obtained diplomas, 86% did so by earning a GED, emphasizing the value of this option during incarceration. Similarly, only 8% of individuals in Cavendish's study earned diplomas within three years after their release from the juvenile justice system. Slightly more than half (51%) of those were GEDs. However, these values deviated for individuals with disabilities. Specifically, youth with EBD and LD were 61% and 86% less likely (respectively) to earn any kind of diploma during their detainment compared to their peers without disabilities. Cavendish also reported that only 55% of students with LD and 52% of those with EBD returned to school within three years of their release from the juvenile justice system.

Although legislation like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) places emphasis on at-risk students graduating from high school through a traditional route (i.e., earning a diploma from school), this is not always a realistic avenue for adjudicated youth – especially those with disabilities. Many schools have policies that allow the refusal of reenrollment to students who have had an encounter with the law (Nance, 2016). In fact, CSG Justice Center (2015) found that more than a third of states in the U.S. automatically enroll adjudicated youth into alternative schools upon their release from the justice system. On average, schools such as these have lower rates of graduation than traditional public schools (CSG Justice Center, 2015). Moreover, students who find themselves in alternative settings are often only further exposed to deviant peers (Nance, 2016), restricting their access to positive peer groups who are essential to developing school engagement (Griffiths, Lilles, Furlong, & Sidhwa, 2012) and the prosocial influences that are vital to reentry (Osgood et al., 2010).

The purpose of the third manuscript was to aide adjudicated youth with disabilities and those at-risk in passing the GED exam, thus eliminating the need to return to a high school setting and enabling them to enroll in post-secondary academic and vocational programs. In particular, the intervention involved instructing participants in a writing strategy paired with goal-setting components in order to test its efficacy on the GED Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA) subtest of the GED exam. The research questions that guided this study were (a) What are the effects of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (Hughes, Schumker, & Deshler, 2005; Therrien, Hughes, & Kapeleski, 2009) with goal-setting on youth offenders' expository essay writing skills? and (b) Will goal-

setting and mastery of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy generalize to improve the quality of youth offenders' RLA Extended Response GED essays?

I recruited four participants who were preparing to take the GED at a juvenile detention facility and who were identified as struggling writers by their special education teacher and principal. Upon guardian consent and student assent, the researcher executed a semi-concurrent multiple-probe across participants design (Kazdin, 2011). After collecting baseline data on a minimum of three probes for each participant, individual participants were instructed in how to use the Essay Test-Taking Strategy in conjunction with the goal-setting components. Goal-setting variables were selected based on their relevance to the GED RLA Extended Response test, as highlighted in the Answer Guidelines released by the GED Testing Service (American Council on Education, 2015), and included (a) number of words written, (b) number of complete paragraphs, and (c) number of transition words and phrases. Once participants were instructed in how to use the writing strategy and goal-setting component, they completed five post-intervention probes.

All of the essay prompts that were used throughout the study were officially released by the GED Testing Service or were a component of a GED preparation book and align with the updated 2014 version of the GED RLA Extended Response portion of the exam. Each completed essay was assessed using the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric (Therrien et al., 2009) and the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric for the RLA Extended Response GED (American Council on Education, 2015) in order to exam generalizability to the GED. I was the sole author of the manuscript.

Future Research

My future research will continue to engage with the notion of improving outcomes for adjudicated youth with disabilities through transition planning and post-release community engagement. One of the ways I intend to do this is to develop a more systematic way of determining how to select appropriate transitional programming for individuals, such as understanding which risk factors place students at a higher risk for drop-out in order to help inform decisions such as whether a student should return to school or prepare for the GED. I also hope to explore ways in which youth offenders' school-connectedness can be improved, thus decreasing the likelihood of dropping-out and increasing community engagement, and thereby decreasing the chances of recidivism.

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CHAPTER II

NAVIGATING BARRIERS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION IN A JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

Abstract

Youth with special education related disabilities are drastically overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. However, the education services needed to support these students are often inadequate in detention and correctional facilities. Issues pertaining to communication between agencies, access to student records, and collaboration among staff are just some of the factors that can prohibit sufficient special education programming in schools embedded in the juvenile justice system. This case study examined how staff at one juvenile detention center addressed such impediments to special education by developing and maintaining relationships in attempts to preserve the education rights of adjudicated youth with disabilities. Through creative problem-solving tactics, the special education team overcame barriers that would have otherwise restricted residents' access to special education. Implications for practice are explored based on how issues were handled as well as why certain barriers continued to present themselves and how they could have been ameliorated.

Keywords: juvenile detention, special education, disabilities, relationships

Navigating Barriers to Special Education in a Juvenile Detention Center

There is a growing number of class-action cases alleging that schools in juvenile justice facilities across the country are breaking the law by not meeting state and federal mandates regarding educational services, particularly for individuals with disabilities (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). As of 2013, nearly 60 lawsuits had focused on the noncompliance of juvenile corrections with regard to provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) including child find, individualized education plans (IEPs), least restrictive environment (LRE), and transition services (Gagnon, Steinberg, Crockett, Murphy, & Gaddis, 2013). Despite such litigations, Leone and Wruble (2015) found that states often fail to sustain the reforms that emerge as a result of these legal battles.

Students with disabilities, who represent between 30-70% of the juvenile justice population (Mallett, 2009; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirer, 2005), are at a continued disadvantage due to issues of noncompliance. Although this population (i.e., justice-involved youth with disabilities) is among those with the highest needs, they conversely receive less support than necessary to meet those needs (Geib, Chapman, D'Amaddio, & Grigorenko, 2011). In fact, data show that less than half (46%) of youth who qualify for disability services in secure custody actually receive them (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). Accordingly, Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, and Havel (2002) found that youth with disabilities exiting the juvenile justice system were significantly (p <.01) more likely to recidivate within six months of their release compared to their peers without disabilities.

Title I Part D of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) mandates that juvenile justice facilities aide youth through grade 12 (up to age 21 for individuals with disabilities) in "attaining traditional high school diplomas" (Juvenile Law Center, 2016). In doing so, the law holds local education agencies (LEAs) responsible for increasing the graduation rate of students in the juvenile justice system. Despite national laws like ESSA and IDEA (2004), however, students with disabilities often receive insufficient educational services while held in detention and correctional settings (Geib et al., 2011; Leone & Cutting, 2004; Leone & Wruble, 2015). This inadequacy in turn negatively affects students' likelihood of returning to school after they are released and further contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline (Bullis et al., 2002; Katsiyannis & Murry, 2000). Subsequently, fewer than 20% of individuals who have been incarcerated ultimately attain high school diplomas or GEDs (Farn & Adams, 2016; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). For these reasons, it is imperative that juvenile detention and correctional facilities provide appropriate special education services to support academic advancement for the extensive population of adjudicated youth with disabilities.

IDEA in the Juvenile Justice System

IDEA (2004) is federal legislation that entitles students with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as determined by each student's IEP team and is subsequently documented in a student's IEP. Although there is a dearth of research regarding adherence to IDEA regulations in juvenile justice facilities, one consistent finding has emerged through the existent data: the justice system is failing its most vulnerable students (Southern Education Foundation [SEF], 2014). Issues surrounding the identification of needs, provision of services, and qualifications of personnel are

pervasive throughout juvenile justice schools and prohibit access to FAPE that individuals with disabilities are entitled to (IDEA, 2004).

Identification of Needs

IDEA (2004) mandates the use of child-find procedures in order to identify students who receive special education services and to locate and evaluate youths suspected of having disabilities in order to qualify them for services. However, systemic hindrances, such as inadequate record transmission systems, commonly prohibit students with disabilities from being identified in the juvenile justice system. Inconsistent use (or absence) of a systematic process for identifying and evaluating students for the presence of disabilities also presents a problem.

Record transfer and coordination. Although juvenile justice facilities are legally mandated to use child-find procedures in order to identify students with disabilities, LEAs also have a responsibility in this process (Leone, Meisel, & Drakeford, 2002). Some states do have state-wide data information systems to ease the transfer of student information between educational entities. However, data in these systems are often inconsistently entered or incomplete (SEF, 2014).

In addition to inconsistent record transfer between LEAs and juvenile justice facilities, there is the issue of record coordination within justice centers. Despite the need for unified record and assessment coordination within facilities that would enable communication between all relevant staff members, detention and corrections systems often embody the opposite. Researchers have found that segregation among teams of staff (e.g., education, mental health, security) create discordances in facilities that hinder

the transmission of student information among those working with students (Leone & Cutting, 2004; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2013).

Transition programming. Interagency transition coordination is among the most highly overlooked aspects of IEPs and special education programming in the juvenile justice system, despite that all individuals with disabilities ages 14 and older must have coursework-related transition goals and individuals 16 and older must have goals related to postsecondary school and/or work included in their IEPs (Leone et al., 2002). IDEA (2004) states that transition services should be results-oriented with an emphasis on postsecondary, vocational, and continuing education in addition to independent living, life skills, and employment components. Despite this, only a quarter of states in the U.S. report that their juvenile justice facilities analyze transition outcomes for youth with disabilities regarding their attainment of necessary academic and employment skills (Council for State Governments [CSG] Justice Center, 2015).

Qualifications of Personnel

The state of special education programming in the juvenile justice system is further compounded by the level of training and professional development had by and available to those working with adjudicated youths with disabilities. Although a national statistic regarding the credentials of teachers and staff in the juvenile justice system does not yet exist, it is speculated that many who teach in detention and corrections facilities are under-qualified (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2014). Further, funding often restricts professional development and the recruitment of qualified teachers, administrators, and staff resulting in a large proportion of corrections employees who do not have requisite knowledge or skills for the job (Houchins, Puckett-Patterson, Crosby,

Shippen, & Jolivette, 2009; Leone & Wruble, 2015). Further, observations conducted by SEF (2014) and a survey administered by Houchins and colleagues (2009) revealed that systemic impediments such as student transience, classroom space, lack of instructional support, and outdated teaching materials hinders the abilities of even qualified instructional staff from providing necessary general and special education instruction.

Training and professional development. Through their survey with 78 juvenile justice teachers regarding barriers to providing effective education, Houchins et al. (2009) found that special educators felt that their professional needs were frequently misunderstood. They further reported that other members of staff lacked a strong grasp on concepts of behavior management, appropriate class activities, and instruction for students with disabilities. Teachers also revealed issues with administration. Survey respondents asserted that if administrators had received training specific to corrections settings and "held degrees from accredited schools" (p. 161), they would be better able to establish clear goals and expectations, provide adequate feedback to teachers, and abide by the laws that regulate juvenile justice settings and special education practice. Price, Martin, and Robertson (2010) highlight that administrators in institutional settings are not mandated to undergo training specific to those settings, nor are there any programs nationwide that exist to train individuals for such positions.

Purpose and Research Questions

Issues surrounding special education in juvenile justice facilities are obstacles that educators in these settings encounter daily. They are often hurdles extraneous to those of special educators teaching in traditional public schools. As significant numbers of youth in detention facilities are illiterate or only marginally literate, education is critically

important to ensuring their future is not one behind bars (Leone & Cutting, 2004). To address the achievement gap for students with disabilities, IEP services must be implemented no matter where students are receiving their education. For that to occur, all parties involved must be cooperative and mindful of IDEA (2004) and the other factors at play. As Leone (1994) states:

> Education services for youths with disabilities in juvenile corrections exist within both school and institutional contexts. Understanding how eligible students receive special education and related services requires knowledge of institutional factors and policies that support or impede the provision of those services (p. 55).

The purpose of this study was to understand if and how these factors were navigated by those at the helm of special education decision-making and delivery in a juvenile detention center.

Research Questions

1. What are the underlying processes that need to occur to implement special education services and adhere to IDEA (2004) regulations in a juvenile detention center?
2. How do relationships within a detention center and between the center and outside agents (e.g., LEAs) associate with adherence to IDEA and special education services?

Conceptual Framework

To investigate the questions above, I employed an interpretivist qualitative research design which allowed me to understand processes, outcomes, and perspectives of the individuals involved (Erickson, 1986). Qualitative research uncovers the "what" and "how" of given contexts, and interpretivism operates under several assumptions that serve to capture the experiences of individuals. A fundamental assumption of

interpretivism is that meanings are created through the lenses of the researcher and the researched, resulting in multiple meanings or realities of any given situation based on elements like context, experience, and perception (Erickson, 1986). Erickson (1986) explains that interpretive researchers seek "concrete universals" through an investigation of the particular and further notes "the primary concern of interpretive research is particularizability, rather than generalizability" (p. 130). Thus, the process of knowing must begin at a local level in order to become any form of general knowledge.

As significant numbers of youths who are involved in the juvenile justice system ultimately drop out of school, the educational services they receive while incarcerated are critically important to promoting graduation and deterring recidivism (Farn & Adams, 2016; Leone & Cutting, 2004). To achieve these goals, IDEA (2004) regulations must be adhered to by all parties involved – which requires relationships within justice centers and between centers and external parties to be reliable and unified. For any of this to occur, we must first understand why issues arise in these relationships and how they can be resolved by individuals on the ground level of education coordination and decision-making.

Methods

Site and Participant Selection

Following Institutional Review Board approval, this research was initiated at Pinewood Juvenile Detention Center (PJDC)[1] which was a juvenile detention center located in a small city in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. PJDC was a 40 bed facility and had three different programs for the youth detained there: a detention

[1] All identifying information regarding setting and participants has been changed.

program, a post-dispositional program, and a community placement program. The detention program was for males and females sentenced from five different counties whose average stay is 30 days or less (i.e., those awaiting adjudication and those serving a brief sentence). The post-dispositional program also hosted males and females from those five counties. The residents in this program, however, were sentenced to a 90 or180 day stay, depending on the discretion of the state's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Youth in the detention and post-dispositional programs ranged in age from 10 to 17 years old. Last, the community placement program accepted males ages 16 to 20 years old who were between three and 12 months away from their release from DJJ. Individuals participating in the community placement program were accepted from any locality in the state and were preparing to transition from a correctional facility back into the community.

Education was a large emphasis in all three programs at PJDC where individuals could earn high school credit hours, General Equivalency Diplomas (GED), and traditional high school diplomas. Youth attended school at the center five days a week from 8am until 3:30pm (with an hour and 15 minute midday break for lunch and leisure) totaling over 30 hours a week. Students at PJDC were enrolled in school 11 months out of the year, as opposed to the traditional 10 month schedule many facilities adhere to.

The focal participant of this study was the special education coordinator, June. June was selected because she was responsible for implementing special education services at PJDC and was integral in organizing and overseeing all aspects of IDEA (2004). June was the sole special education coordinator, teacher, and case manager and

was thus tasked with not only implementing student services but directly responding to issues that affected special education within PJDC.

Other key participants included the principal of PJDC's school, Danny, and the center's administrative assistant and registrar, Emily. Danny and Emily were the only staff members who worked with June regularly on responsibilities related to special education. Danny was the only PJDC administrator who was directly involved in special education coordination and decision-making, and Emily aided both June and Danny in administrative duties such as the retrieval and upkeep of records.

Additionally, staff from the education, mental health, and security departments were included in this research to the extent that they interacted with June. Because this study is based in interpretivist methodology with the purpose of understanding how issues are (or are not) handled at a micro level, the focus was on the individuals in charge of decision-making.

Data Collection

Interviews. I conducted three semi-structured interviews were conducted with June, Danny, and Emily (see Appendices B-D). These individuals were selected based on their varying roles at PJDC, their relationships to one another, and their relationships to special education-related agencies (e.g., LEAs) outside of the center. Interviews varied in length from 45 to 85 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded with permission from the participant and later transcribed. Additionally, I took notes during the interviews to capture tone of voice, perceived emotion, and body language of the participants. The interviews with Danny and Emily occurred on site in their respective offices and the interview with June took place after work in a private setting.

Observations. Formal observations at PJDC (exclusive of my time as a volunteer) occurred over the course of four weeks. I shadowed June on four occasions for the duration of a day totaling 20 hours. These observations captured a range of June's activities, including but not limited to: co-teaching (i.e., collaboration between special and general educators to enable students with disabilities access to the general curriculum in an inclusive setting), writing IEPs and documenting student data, pulling students out for one-on-one reading interventions, corresponding with personnel from LEAs, and consulting and collaborating with members of the administration, security, teaching, and mental health staff. Additionally, I observed two IEP meetings. Field notes were handwritten during the time of the observations and typed into formal write-ups immediately after each observation with added detail recalled from memory. Analytic memos were later written within one to two weeks of each observation.

Documents. I was permitted to examine IEP, eligibility, and triennial review documents during my observations; however, I was not able to evaluate these documents off-site. Thus, I used the documents as confirmatory measures to triangulate claims about parent and LEA involvement based on the existence of signatures, the formatting of goals, and the alignment of dates to IEP compliance timelines. Notes on these aspects of the documents were included in my field notes.

Data Analysis

I used inductive open-coding to initially analyze observation and interview data during the time of data collection, which allowed me to identify common patterns as they emerged and refocus my observations. By the conclusion of data collection, 10 major themes had developed (see Appendix A). Next, I established codes based on factors

commonly identified in the literature as impediments to special education in the juvenile justice system (see Appendix A). These codes were used to collapse and sort the initial themes through deductive provisional coding (Miles et al., 2014). Finally, after I compiled evidence under each of the provisional codes, I developed assertions around the focus of relationships in order to further align with my conceptual framework. Three of these assertions are explained in the Results section and are supported with specific examples, quotes, and vignettes from the data. Extended time in the field (i.e., collecting observation data systematically over the course of four weeks in order to observe varying situations) and multiple data collection methods were utilized to support, refute, and triangulate findings (i.e., cross-verification of: observations with interviews, interviews of one participant with interviews of the other two participants, and verifying claims from interviews and observations with documents when appropriate).

Criteria for Validity

As a basis for establishing validity, I attempted to counter Erickson's (1986) five challenges to validity, which include: inadequate data collection, inadequate variety of evidence, faulty interpretations, inadequate disconfirming evidence, and inadequate discrepant case analysis. Considering these challenges, I collected data through frequent and prolonged engagement with the participants, including 20 hours of formal observation (excluding my time as a volunteer). I employed multiple data collection methods (i.e., observation, interviews, and document review) to triangulate the findings of this research. By maintaining a methodological journal throughout data collection and analysis, I compiled and challenged the assertions of my research. Additionally, I used member-checks to ensure accuracy of my interpretations with particular regard for why

certain participant actions were taken and the sentiment participants had in such situations. Finally, only assertions with substantial supporting evidence (i.e., those that had the most data with varying sources to support it as compared to assertions not included) are included in the Findings.

Site Access and Reflexivity Statement

I chose to conduct this research at PJDC as I had previously gained access to the site as a volunteer/tutor in the center's education department. Over the course of data collection, I continued to volunteer and thus was occasionally cast in the role of participant-observer, though I attempted to act solely as an observer during observations.

This study was conducted predominantly through observations and interviews, and the subsequent data were analyzed through an interpretivist lens. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the researcher as the dominant instrument of the study. Although volunteering at PJDC allotted me the opportunity to establish a basic understanding of the setting and participants, it also fostered the development of relationships between myself and the participants. Furthermore, as the staff and students at PJDC were accustomed to seeing me in the role of a volunteer, the degree to which I participated in the setting varied as I collected data. I attempted to remain strictly in the role of the non-participant observer but there were times that this was challenging. For instance, as I am a former special educator and am also familiar with her students, June occasionally asked for my input on IEPs as we were reviewing them to which I lent my professional opinion. Additionally, when observing June co-teach, students sometimes requested my help with their work. Again, during these occurrences I offered students assistance or signaled to June and the general educator that a student needed support.

I acknowledge that I cannot completely shed the biases that may have developed as a result of volunteering at PJDC and as a former special education teacher. These are two lenses that have shaped my interpretations of the research, but that I believe have also aided my understanding of special education in a juvenile detention center.

Findings

I have generated three assertions that consider the influence of relationships both within PJDC and between PJDC and outside agents (i.e., LEAs and parents) in regard to special education regulations and related issues specific to the institutional setting. These assertions and the evidence used to support them demonstrate how relationships can both positively and negatively affect special education. The assertions are outlined and subsequently described with supporting evidence.

Assertion 1: Communication

The first assertion states: *The special education coordinator must set clear expectations and facilitate communication among all parties in the detention center to ensure awareness of IEPs.* June's first step in establishing IEP services was to inform all necessary individuals (i.e., teachers, administrators, mental health personnel, and security) of residents' needs and accommodations as they applied both during and after school hours. June disseminated this information to her colleagues through mass communication via email and through individual conversations. Additionally, she encouraged other members of administration to reiterate IEP expectations in their interactions with staff to affirm the standards of special education in the center.

For instance, once it was established that a resident with an IEP would be staying at PJDC for an extended period (i.e., longer than two days), June wrote what she referred

to as a "page at a glance." This document described the resident's disability, primary and secondary goals, and accommodations. June selected this information as it outlined areas of need and how students should be treated based on those needs. Once the document was created, June emailed it as an attachment to all the teachers and therapeutic staff who would be working with the resident (Observation, 10/17/16). Because IEPs can be lengthy and cumbersome to read, June chose to communicate with staff precisely what they needed to know about particular students by using the page at a glance technique. June thought this communication tactic increased the likelihood that staff would be informed of residents' accommodations more so than directing them to read a 30 page IEP.

June ensured that members of security were also informed of residents' accommodations as they applied to situations outside of the school day such as when directions were being given which, if not followed precisely, could earn a resident a charge (the consequence of which was spending a few hours in isolation). Other high-level members of staff followed her lead. "I was really impressed because Kathleen sent out an email to everybody – [security] included – about Nick and how you need to speak slowly and you may need to explain things several times," June noted, impressed by the director of programs who contacted staff about a resident with a significant intellectual disability and auditory processing deficits. "She ran it by me before she sent it out, and I was very pleased because coming from her is a different aspect than coming from me," (Interview with June, 11/3/16). By reinforcing the interaction expectations for staff regarding Nick, Kathleen demonstrated unity with June in her effort to ensure residents with special needs were treated appropriately.

Danny, the principal, also recognized the importance of communication. To him, conversations served as a foundation for developing an understanding of students and toward collaboration between groups of staff. He explained:

> Having good relationships with the administration in here is vital to helping them understand the special education process, especially when you're talking to the chief of security... Sometimes [accommodations and punishment] don't mesh very well, but if you do it in a proactive way and you build a rapport with them then I've found it's a little bit easier to say, "Come on, hey. Let's work together to figure this kid out. Let's not just put him in [isolation]. That's going to be completely counterproductive. It's not going to do anything for him" (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16).

However, even when proactive measures of communication were taken, instances arose that required June and Danny to intervene as advocates for students with special needs. The following vignette depicts such a scenario.

Vignette

Casey, a ninth-grade resident with an intellectual disability, has permission from his math teacher, Nate, to make paper footballs at the end of class once he completes his work. However, Casey must leave the paper footballs in Nate's classroom when he is transitioning to another class. Casey knows this but is forgetful of the rule and one day leaves Nate's classroom with a paper football in his pocket.

As Casey is being pat down, a routine occurrence for residents when they are changing locations, Campbell (the member of security who is completing the pat-down) discovers the paper football. Campbell considers the paper football paraphernalia and immediately transfers Casey to an isolation room, which is in a hallway between the back conference area where June's office is and the lobby outside the cafeteria. The hallway is enclosed by two heavy metal doors at either end that can only be opened with permission from security staff in the main control room.

When Casey is brought back to the isolation room, June is waiting on the other side of the metal door between her office and the hallway – out of sight from Campbell and Casey. With no knowledge of June's presence, Campbell begins barking at Casey as if he has been caught with an actual weapon.

"You know I can give you up to eight hours for having illegal paraphernalia on you!" Campbell threatens as June listens through the door. His tirade continues as the heavy door unlocks, giving June access to push through to the isolation room where Campbell and Casey are located.

June calmly approaches Campbell and says in her slow southern drawl, "Mr. Campbell, can I speak to you for just a second?" Surprised, Campbell steps out of the isolation room to meet June in the hallway. "Do you know any background on this kid?" June inquires when she has Campbell's ear.

"Well, I mean, I know what he did to get locked up," Campbell asserts with less dominance than he had moments earlier.

"Do you know that this child's parents kept him in a cage? Furthermore, are you aware that he cannot process what you're saying at the speed at which you are speaking?" June waits patiently for his reply: a simple utterance of the word "Oh."

Campbell turns around and positions himself in the doorway of the isolation room. He maintains his bluster but makes the decision to remove Casey from isolation and instead revoke his gaming privileges for the remainder of the week. June carries on down the hallway towards the English class she is expected to co-teach.

This vignette illustrates the necessity to communicate with all staff through various mediums to ensure the appropriate treatment of residents, particularly those with

disabilities. Even though Campbell had been informed of Casey's intellectual disability and processing deficits when Casey was initially admitted, Campbell may have forgotten or was simply torn between adhering to the rules of the center and accommodating the child's disability – an issue common to security staff. June intervened serendipitously in this situation and others when she happened to witness interactions she felt were escalating for reasons beyond students' control. After one such situation between Frank, the mental health counselor who spoke at a rate that would put auctioneers to shame, and another resident with a processing delay, June noted: "I always tell [Frank], 'You can't talk fast and you can't use big words,'" (Observation, 11/2/16).

June's intention was not to dictate to others how to do their jobs, but it was her responsibility to ensure that IEP accommodations were followed and that residents with disabilities were not at an increased disadvantage because of cognitive and emotional conditions that were out of their control. That meant keeping staff informed of residents' disability profiles and accommodations, and reminding them when they had forgotten.

Assertion 2: Rapport

The second assertion is: *Strong administrative relationships within the detention center contribute to the success of relationships between the center and outside agents*. This assertion is specifically aimed at the dynamic between June, Danny, and Emily. June and Danny had positions as administrators in PJDC's school and Emily as the administrative assistant and registrar for the entire center (including the school). Without a strong rapport between these three individuals, relationships between PJDC and outside agents (e.g., LEAs) would not have been as well-supported. The team of June, Danny, and Emily was an asset to PJDC in this way.

Within this trio, Emily was the access point and gatekeeper. Unlike in many other detention centers where the responsibilities are split, Emily was accountable for both the retrieval and organization of IEP records (among other documents) due to her dual positions as administrative assistant and registrar (Interview with Emily, 11/14/16). Emily was the only other employee at PJDC besides June with full access to every resident's records (Observation, 10/17/16). It was her job to begin the process of tracking down student records, which required building and maintaining relationships with LEAs, social workers, parole officers, families, and members of the court system, and inputting information into a company database that she created (Observation, 10/17/16). With this database, which included previous records and current paperwork that Emily scanned in, June and Danny had full access to IEP records permitting they were at a computer on site (Interview with Emily, 11/14/16).

The significance of this system was that without it, June and Danny would have had to cross the entire building to retrieve records that were pertinent to writing IEPs, conducting eligibility and re-evaluation assessments, and writing amendments. This meant being granted permission by the main security office to open 10 doors total, which was a time-consuming endeavor on a good day. Having the records at their fingertips enabled June and Danny to make IEP-based decisions and complete related tasks without having to go on an odyssey. This resulted in more timely completion of these tasks, lower levels of frustration, and additional time that could be spent with students.

Not only did having Emily as the gatekeeper benefit June and Danny because of her organization system, but her background in special education also gave them an

advantage. In discussing how she helped keep June in compliance with annual IEP and triennial evaluation dates on newly acquired records, Emily explained:

> That was one additional thing that I added on myself just because it wasn't going to get caught until June or Danny went through it. If I was looking at [an IEP] first, I could catch something and question it with them… I email June and I say, 'This is the date' just to give her kind of a heads up before she's just thrown all this paperwork (Interview with Emily, 11/14/16).

When June took me on a virtual tour of the record database Emily created, she explained that oftentimes Emily directed her attention to unsigned documents and missing pages within IEPs that were sent by LEAs. "Emily took a few courses in special ed, so she knows," June told me with confidence in Emily's abilities (Observation, 10/17/16). June and Danny developed trust in Emily's knowledge of special education and in her capacity to obtain IEP records without needing much direction. Like the database organization system, Emily's understanding of special education documents lessened the amount of time that Danny and June needed to spend on administrative tasks. Emily described the often-relentless process of contacting LEAs in attempts to retrieve IEP and academic records:

> Well I'm the nag (laughs). I don't mind being that for [June] and… she can easily come to me now and, where she used to try to do it herself, she'll say 'Hey Emily, I need this and this. Can you get it?' and I say, 'Sure.' And I try to get it. If I can't get it, I can't get it. But then she's not wasting that time contacting or playing phone tag or emailing with someone… Once there's no response for me, that's when Danny steps in. And I can simply say to Danny 'They're not answering me. Can you call them?' and that's how easy it is with just three of us (Interview with Emily, 11/14/16).

Danny explained that "Emily is amazing, and… has her 'friends'" – implying that she had developed close connections with other registrars – but sometimes with the bigger cities he had to use his leverage as an administrator to get a response (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16). June elaborated on this, acknowledging the huge part that Emily

played in helping them establish relationships with LEAs from the five base counties that fed into the center. June speculated that Emily had more difficulty maintaining relationships with the largest city (which only admitted students to the community placement program) because of high staff turn-over rates there. She explained that this phenomenon caused Emily to "start over again with the relationship and often with the whole process of trying to get IEPs each time a correspondent there leaves" (Observation, 10/17/16). Despite the need to obtain records in a timely manner to be in compliance under IDEA (2004), June understood that some matters were out of Emily's hands.

However, affairs requiring communication with parents and guardians outside of document retrieval was largely June's domain. Emily acknowledged that June conducted these family correspondences "because [families] have a lot of questions, specifically about the kids, and she knows [the residents] best" (Interview with Emily, 11/14/16). Although June trusted Emily to track down necessary documents from LEAs, June handled the more personal side of special education given her position and the high sensitivity that comes with having a child in the legal system.

Assertion 3: Reciprocity

The third assertion states: *The ability to implement IEPs is reliant on relationships between the detention center and outside agents. These relationships often center on trust and the control of and access to information.* This assertion captures common difficulties PJDC encountered with LEAs and parents regarding IEPs. Accompanying many of these issues was a lack of control on the part of the detention center, as briefly discussed in Assertion 2. For each problem, however, PJDC attempted to find a solution.

As mentioned, Emily, Danny, and June were not always successful in obtaining the records they needed in a timely manner. This created organization and compliance issues for PJDC, especially considering the legal timelines June was under to revise and implement IEPs. "When a kid comes in to us, technically I have 30 days to amend the IEP. I may not get the IEP until the 28th day" (Interview with June, 11/3/16). This gave June the improbable task of amending the IEP and having it signed by a guardian in just two days. Not only did the LEAs' delay in sending over IEPs cause issues of timeline compliance, but without possession of new residents' IEPs June was technically unable to deliver services.

Still, this did not deter the course of her instructional decision-making. When June was aware that a student had an IEP (often through admittance of the student, his or her family, or his or her previous school), June took control back over these situations by delivering services regardless. During these circumstances, services were largely determined by intake testing and observations until the actual IEP was received. "We serve them either way," she stated while demonstrating the intake process to me (Observation, 10/17/16).

Although it was a small victory when an IEP was obtained from an LEA, with it could come other problems. For instance, Danny noted the frequency with which PJDC received IEPs with immeasurable goals:

> One that comes to mind is, "Johnny will display the behaviors of a normal 10th grader." You can't even measure that. I mean, what's a normal 10th grader? …So, we'll get a goal like that and we'll go "What does this mean?"… And we own the IEP. When it comes here, this is all on us so we would have to honor that goal if we just do an amendment on it and a lot of times June and I will speak and we're not going to do that because it's just not fair to the students. The goals are just counterproductive. You can't even decipher what they're trying to accomplish there. (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16)

Instead, Danny or June would call or email the special education case manager at the LEA to develop a goal that would work for the student both at PJDC and when the student returned to his or her base school. "That's kind of how we sell it. Like, this will be better for you all when he or she gets out into the school system" (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16). Danny knew the value of making a pitch that would benefit the LEA in order to gain their cooperation and, subsequently, better serve the student.

Issues of control were also common with parents of students at PJDC. Specifically, when parents missed scheduled IEP meetings and neglected to sign IEP forms they controlled the extent to which their child received services and the ability for PJDC to stay in compliance with IDEA (2004). Although these consequences were likely unintended, they affected special education at PJDC nonetheless. The following vignette demonstrates the experiences June often had when trying to obtain signatures on documents.

Vignette

Walking into the main office, I find June standing eagerly with two manila envelopes in her hands. "Last night was visitation and I'm hoping these two guys' parents came and signed this paperwork," June explains as she slides her hand beneath the lips of each envelope and removes two packets that are held together with neon plastic paper clips. One packet is an annual IEP and the other is eligibility documentation qualifying a student for special education services. Examining the final pages of both, June announces, "Half are signed. Not bad, but I've been after this one kid's father for months. He promised he'd be down to visit his son this weekend, but I guess not. Shouldn't surprise me, but I really need these eligibility documents signed.

His son is supposed to get released soon." June lets out a deep breath and takes both packets back to her office.

Two days later I return and ask June if she's had any luck with getting a hold of that particular student's father. "Oh yes!" she replies. "Frank lives about a half hour from where that dad is, so I asked Frank if he wouldn't mind delivering the paperwork to be signed. Good thing, otherwise I'd have had to make the trip myself."

June took matters into her own hands out of concern for a student returning to his base school without the security of special education services and the fact that PJDC was delivering those services to a student without written parent permission (verbal consent had been granted over the phone; Observation, 11/2/16). Though June did not have power over whether a parent attended visitation and signed the necessary paperwork, she took control back over the situation through unconventional problem solving by ensuring that the documents were hand-delivered to the parent's and returned intact to PJDC by a staff member.

Administration and staff at PJDC worked to gain leverage and trust in relationships between the facility and outside agents, namely parents and schools. During the morning of my interview with Danny, he was preparing to host a tour for a few administrators who were visiting from a local feeder county that afternoon. He had invited them to see the detention center since PJDC served upwards of 45 students from that county the previous year. "It's an opportunity for me to sit down with them and say, 'This is what we do with [the students] here. And hopefully when they get back to you, we can have better communication'" (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16).

For Danny, inviting the LEAs to visit PJDC was a tactic used to build better systems of contact between the agencies. However, he noted that the success of this approach was inconsistent. "We've tried to do that with all the school systems that we serve, but some are more successful than others. Some people care and some people don't" (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16), Danny said regarding the apathy he perceived certain school administrators to have toward collaborating with PJDC to benefit their shared students. Danny and June also frequently attended reenrollment meetings for residents to advocate for appropriate educational placements as oftentimes school districts were inclined to place released youths in alternative settings (Interview with Danny, 11/14/16; Interview with June, 11/3/16). Despite these efforts, some relationships between PJDC and certain school districts remained tattered as sincere partnerships could not be forged.

Supporting open-communication and establishing a welcome front with parents was equally as important as doing so with LEAs. Every week at PJDC, each teacher wrote at least one positive letter about a student. These letters were left at visitation for parents to read. If a parent did not attend visitation, Emily mailed the letter home. "The parents are so used to the opposite. The kids are so used to the opposite," (Interview with June, 11/3/16) June said, recognizing that students and their parents rarely had positive experiences with schools.

The letters were a sign of support and a way for PJDC to extend a hand in developing relationships with residents' families. They also served as encouragement for parents to maintain relationships with their children despite their status in the juvenile justice system. On two separate occasions, mothers of two residents acknowledged that

they were more inclined to take part in their child's education because of the support they received from PJDC as compared to previous experiences with their sons' base schools (Observations, 10/26/16 and 11/2/16).

Discussion

PJDC encountered issues common in the literature regarding adherence to special education in juvenile detention and correctional settings. By capitalizing on and developing relationships within the center and with outside agents, the staff established multiple tactics in attempts to overcome these hurdles. Still, some problems persisted.

Combatting Issues within the Facility

Researchers have found that departmental autonomy and opposing philosophies (e.g., rehabilitation versus punishment) contribute to departmental segregation within justice facilities which in turn hinders the transmission of student information and the consistency with which students are treated (Leone & Cutting, 2004; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2013). All members of staff (e.g., teachers, administration, security) who work with youths should have knowledge of students' specific disabilities, needs, and accommodations in order to provide appropriate programming (Leone & Cutting, 2004). For instance, individuals with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) often have behavior intervention plans (BIP). However, if members of security are unaware of a student's BIP, the student is at an increased likelihood of being punished (e.g., placed in isolation) for behavior related to his or her disability which creates additional restrictions on the student's access to education, related services, and LRE (Leone & Wruble, 2015; Mallett, 2009).

Establishing multiple lines of communication between departments within PJDC was the main tactic used against issues stemming from departmental autonomy that could negatively influence special education (Leone & Cutting, 2004). For instance, the special educator initiated the transfer of student information to staff members by emailing the page at a glance - the purpose of which was to simplify IEPs so that the information would be read by everyone and readily available when questions arose. She went a step further by personally discussing students' needs with her colleagues and intervened in situations that could hamper residents' access to special education. For instance, had the student with the paper football remained in isolation the special educator would not have been able to deliver IEP services or academic instruction in excess of 10 hours a week, and it would occur through a slot in the door (Observation, 11/2/16). By intervening with security, the special educator prevented such a situation from occurring.

As the principal acknowledged, the education and security departments did not always view situations from the same angle. It was the mission of security to keep residents and staff physically safe by enforcing rules whereas the education department strove to maintain the academic potential of residents. Personal conversations between administrators in the security and education departments were a step toward achieving a common ground. However, the necessity for the principal and special educator to serendipitously intervene at times signaled the need for interventions beyond communication through email and in-person meetings.

Although the special education coordinator and principal at PJDC made efforts to keep all relevant staff informed of students' IEPs and intervene in situations to prevent unfair treatment, this format was insufficient by itself. A fundamental knowledge base

for working with youths who have disabilities is necessary in the juvenile justice system but was likely deficient for many staff members. Kvarfordt, Purcell, and Shannon (2005) surveyed personnel (N=350) working in juvenile justice facilities and other court services in Virginia regarding their knowledge and training about individuals with disabilities. Results indicated that only 62% of respondents had any related training. Further, less than half (47%) of the sample specifically underwent training about the nature of learning disabilities (LD), which is the second most prevalent disability among students in the justice system behind EBD (Mallett, 2009). This lack of training is problematic particularly in the confines of the justice system as staff can easily misinterpret the behavior of adjudicated youth as deliberate rather than a function of a disability (Kvarfordt et al., 2005; Leone et al., 2002).

Although pertinent student information was shared among departments at PJDC, there continued to be some misalignment in how the education and security staff handled residents. To ameliorate this, both departments could have collaborated to develop a common aim rooted in best practice. Specifically, a therapeutic approach should have been consistently used by both departments over a reliance on disciplinary tactics (Lipsey, 2009). Despite the belief that behavioral change derives from discipline, therapeutic tactics (e.g., counseling) have proven to be more effective in lowering recidivism (Lipsey, 2009). In addition to developing a uniform approach among departments, the special educator and principal could have offered staff-wide training on appropriate techniques for working with youths with disabilities rather than addressing issues in isolation as they arose.

Tackling Issues with Outside Entities

Similar to the problem-solving techniques used within the facility, developing a dependable process for overcoming hurdles with outside entities was a work in progress for PJDC. However, by establishing a system using specific role assignments, the special educator, principal, and administrative assistant worked together to form relationships between PJDC and outside agents that eased the transfer of information. As the gatekeeper with a background in special education, the administrative assistant was trusted to develop rapport with LEAs and other agencies in order to obtain legal and academic records. The special educator and principal relied on the administrative assistant to decipher IEP timelines and locate missing documents – an invaluable asset to their time considering SEF (2014) found that it often took juvenile justice facilities days or longer to obtain IEPs and transcripts from students' base schools. Further, with the administrative assistant and the principal taking the lead on communication with LEAs, the special educator was better able to allocate time to families and students.

Although there were difficulties between PJDC and outside agents, the staff and administration's willingness to go beyond their job descriptions made way for unique problem-solving techniques. For example, knowing that the counselor lived within relative proximity to a student's father who missed visitation, the special educator was able to depend on him to deliver IEP documents that needed signing. The counselor's dedication to ensuring that a student would be equipped with an IEP upon his release meant exceeding the requirements of his position.

Finally, administration and staff at PJDC took proactive measures to develop and maintain relationships with LEAs and families. Administration at PJDC recognized the negative stigma of the detention setting and aimed to break the stereotype by inviting

administrators from feeder school districts to visit, attending reenrollment meetings in person, and by sending positive letters home to parents.

For youth returning to school from the justice system, negative perceptions and stigma from teachers and peers can prohibit student engagement and even catalyze negative behaviors as students conform to the identity selected for them by others (Nance, 2016). Sinclair and colleagues (2017) found that the majority of traditional public school teachers in their study had dismal outlooks on the academic capabilities and futures of students returning to school indicative of the low expectations they had of adjudicated youths as students and, more generally, as people. Specifically, only 20% of teachers thought that youth offenders could achieve grade-level standards and less than 7% of respondents felt that students were likely to resist further criminal activity and achieve financial security in their lifetimes. By inviting public school staff to visit PJDC and by visiting base schools as representatives of the detention center, the administrators and staff at PJDC wanted to demonstrate the realities of youth incarceration over the stereotypes in order to better enable residents to leave their pasts behind.

Additionally, by continuing to make connections with LEAs and families, PJDC promoted collaborative practices that could benefit adjudicated youths during their transitions back into their communities that seemingly stood above the status quo. Sinclair et al. (2017) found that less than 30% of traditional public school staff felt that transition plans developed by justice facilities were appropriate for public school settings and 65% of staff felt that administrative support for students from justice centers should have been stronger. By attending reenrollment meetings, contacting base schools when IEPs were being addended or rewritten, and inviting personnel from schools to explore

happenings at PJDC, the principal and special educator increased the likelihood that IEPs and transition plans would be appropriate for the settings students were returning to.

The often-unstructured transition process for adjudicated youths returning to school also has implications for record transfer (Leone & Fink, 2017), which presents a unique issue for students returning to school (Anthony et al., 2010; Leone & Weinberg, 2012). Without necessary records, such as transcripts and IEPs, schools do not have ground for which to base academic programming and relevant services (Sinclair et al., 2017), forcing a student's word against the school's assumptions. Sinclair and colleagues (2017) note that this systemic breakdown often results in students retaking courses that they completed in corrections or worse, failing classes (due to "incomplete" work) that they actually passed while detained or incarcerated. Circumstances such as these create futile progress out of academic successes students may have experienced during their incarceration. By attending reenrollment meetings with students and their families, the principal and special education coordinator ensured this would not occur. However, there was no evidence that PJDC followed up with residents after their release to ensure transition plans were adhered to. According to the CSG Justice Center (2015), juvenile justice facilities in only 20 states mandate follow up with students regarding reenrollment after their release.

Limitations

Because the research was conducted at PJDC, much of the data on relationships between the facility and outside agents (i.e., LEAs and parents) captured only the experiences of those at PJDC barring instances when individuals visited the center. This limited the scope of these relationships. Additionally, as I conducted interviews with

only three participants, I am not able to elaborate on the full range of perspectives of those involved with special education at the center.

Conclusion & Implications

Despite the systemic hurdles that can plague special education in juvenile justice facilities, employees on the ground level can combat many of these issues. For instance, problems stemming from departmental autonomy within detention and correctional centers can begin to be solved by establishing uniform research-based practices regarding the treatment of residents. Clear and concise communication via email and personal conversations also creates opportunities to build rapport between departments and offers some assurance that all staff in a facility are on the same page. This can literally be the case if special educators adopt the "page at a glance" technique to inform staff of the most vital information about students. Future research should further explore how other juvenile justice staff view their roles regarding working with individuals with disabilities and the use of best practice for behavior management.

Relationships and communication between justice facilities and external agents can also be improved through in-house action. For example, combining positions (demonstrated by Emily's dual-position as administrative assistant and registrar) and designating specific assignments in a process (such as the distinct roles June, Emily, and Danny had in accessing information through LEAs and working with families) contributes to the cohesiveness of systems that feed into and exist within detention centers. Further, forming relationships with families through constructive communication (such as sending home positive letters) sets a standard for collaborative interactions that may ultimately benefit students and ease the IEP process. Families

should be considered in future research to explore how they may be better incorporated into the special education and transition processes while their child is in secure custody.

Finally, hiring individuals with backgrounds in special education for clerical roles (as depicted by Emily) is an effective start to establishing a reliable record retrieval and organization system. An extension of this idea is to hire security staff who have experience with youth with special needs (especially EBD, LD, and intellectual disabilities; Pyle, Flower, Fall, & Williams, 2016). Or, at the very least, providing professional development on related topics in order to create a bridge between security and education departments as well as to improve the understanding all staff members have of incarcerated youths with disabilities. Although misunderstandings and disagreements may occur, they can be more easily allayed when all parties involved have equal respect for one another's positions and – most importantly – an understanding of the individuals they serve.

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Appendix A

CODE BOOK

PRELIMINARY THEMES (Generated through analytic induction during data collection)

Influence of Administration:	This theme embodied instances when administrators wielded the power of their positions to give directives to staff in the facility and to exercise influence over interactions with LEAs. Results of these directives and interactions were perceived as positive or negative. For instance, the chief of security mandated that students be given a charge (the result of which is time in isolation and a mark on a student's court record) rather than a warning (the result of which is a student having to complete a self-reflection) for any instance that a student said the "N-word" (including the friendly term that was often used between African American students). The response to this by Danny and June (administrative equals to the chief of security) was to meet with each teacher individually to inform them that the education staff would not be adhering to this rule unless the word was used maliciously.
Relationships with Colleagues:	I used this theme to capture interactions between June and Emily, Danny, other teachers, members of security, and mental health staff. Both perceived positive (e.g., June referred to the English teacher she co-taught with as her "work husband") and negative (e.g., when discussing an incident in which a student was removed from her class, the history teacher rolled her eyes and stated that security had "over-reacted to the situation") comments and interactions were included in this category.
Protecting Students:	This theme was used to define incidents in which June and Danny intervened in situations regarding the treatment of students in special education. For instance, both participants remarked in their interviews that they drove to schools for re-enrollment meetings to ensure that students being released from the justice system would not be

	defaulted to alternative settings solely due to their disability label or their incarceration.
Relationships with Students:	Data for this theme related to June's interactions with and comments about students as well as comments made by others regarding June's relationships with students. An example of an interaction occurred during an IEP meeting in which June began discussing the student's progress and achievements while looking directly at the student and smiling. He would look up every few seconds to make eye contact with her. She asked the student if he agreed with her comments and explained that he should be proud of himself. He did not make eye contact with other staff members when they spoke about him during the meeting. An example of a statement made about June and her students occurred during the interview with Danny in which he noted that "she's building rapport with the kids constantly about reading books."
Seeking Help:	This theme captured any instance in which one party or individual sought assistance from another party or person. For example, in our interview Emily explained that school registrars who she had relationships with would frequently call her and ask questions about how to process documents regarding adjudicated students who had left the school or were returning – regardless of whether those students had been placed at PJDC or not.
Adherence to IDEA:	I developed this theme based on instances of compliance and noncompliance with IDEA. An example of compliance was when June pulled a student to work on reading in a one-to-one setting, as dictated by his goals and services documented in the IEP. An instance of noncompliance was when a parent failed to attend IEP meetings on two occasions which caused the annual IEP date to lapse.
Sentiments About the Job:	This theme related to comments and body language that perceivably demonstrated emotion about work surrounding special education in the detention center. Body language and tone were key to defining this code. For instance, in our interview June expressed that she loved her job and began to teary-eyed when discussing the students. However, during an

observation June repeated under her breath "I love my job, I love my job" after a having a disagreement with a member of the mental health staff. Although in both instances she stated that she loved her work, her tone and body language conveyed different meanings behind each comment.

Environmental Influence: Data included under this theme pertained to characteristics and incidents that occurred in the detention facility that would not be typical of traditional public school settings. Examples typically conveyed convenient or inconvenient institutional aspects. For instance, when a teacher was absent there was not a substitute to take his place. Instead, other instructors gave up their planning time in order to cover his class demonstrating inconvenience. Another example, however, was that students were never truant as they did not have a choice in whether or not to attend school which was convenient to teaching and servicing students.

Parent Influence: This theme depicted parent participation via interactions with PJDC, including meeting attendance, the completion of legal paperwork, and comments made about parents by staff. Interactions were both perceived as positive and negative. An example of a positive interaction was a mother who expressed gratitude toward June during a phone IEP meeting regarding the work she had done with her son on his reading goals. An example of a negative influence was when June explained to an intern that she had to reschedule an IEP meeting for 10am despite that it was not conducive to other staff members' schedules because the mother of the student was drunk during the last meeting and thus it was unproductive. She hoped the new meeting was early enough that the parent would not yet be drinking.

Influence of LEAs: Data related to this theme regarded action and inaction on the part of local education agencies (LEAs) that resulted in a direct response from June, Emily, and/or Danny. An example of LEA action was when an IEP was sent to Emily and she immediately scanned the document and reported the compliance dates to June. An example of LEA

	inaction was when a registrar from an LEA failed to call Emily back after three contact attempts which resulted in Emily asking Danny to call the principal at the LEA.

PROVISIONAL CODES (Preliminary themes were compared to provisional codes and re-sorted through deductive coding. The research base that these codes are drawn from can be found in the introduction of this manuscript.)

Communication Between Systems:	This code reflected the involvement and responsiveness (and lack thereof) of outside agents, especially LEAs and parents.
Resources:	This code represented assets in the center, inclusive of staff credentials and teaching materials.
Youth Characteristics:	Because the direct focus of this research was on staff (as opposed to students), this code represented actions and decisions made for and about youth based on their involvement in special education and within the center at large.
Department Autonomy:	This code embodied the relationships between individuals who worked at the center regarding how these relationships affected special education programming.
Institutional Context:	This code represented the influence of rules and policies at the detention center as they deviated from traditional public school settings in relation to special education.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol: Special Education Teacher (June)

Topic: *Career Background*

1. How long have you been a special education teacher?
2. How long have you taught within the juvenile justice system?
3. How many years have you taught at this center in particular?
4. Have you taught in any other school settings? If so, what other types of schools (e.g. private/public, elementary/middle/high school, center for EBD/autism/ID) have you taught in?
5. What influenced your decision to work at a detention center?

Topic: *General Role of Special Education*

1. How would you define the role of a special educator in general (e.g. purpose, tasks)?
2. How would you define your role at the detention center? Do you feel you have just one role or multiple?
3. How has your role changed since you moved from a public school to the detention center, if at all?

Topic: *Systems at Work in the Detention Center*

1. What is the typical intake and IEP implementation process you follow when a youth who receives special education services is admitted to the detention center?
2. What do you find works well with this process?
3. If you could change anything about the intake and IEP implementation process, what would it be and why?
4. If you suspect a student has a disability that is impacting his/her education, but s/he does not have an IEP, how do you address this (if at all)?
5. What factors within the detention center shape your position as a special educator that are different than those at a typical school?
6. What are the constraints of implementing special education in a detention center, if any?
7. There are many groups of professionals who work within the detention center (e.g. administrators, teachers, security). How do these various groups influence the implementation of and adherence to special education services?

Topic: *Systems at Work Beyond the Detention Center*

1. Juvenile detention centers are systems embedded within larger systems at the local, state, and national levels (i.e. the justice system and the education system). How do these broader systems influence special education within the center?
2. Are there other factors that exist beyond the center that influence your decisions regarding special education? If so, what are these other factors?
3. How do _____ affect your job and ability to implement special education? (Specifically name an influence the teacher gives when asking this). – Repeat question for each factor she names.

4. (Use this question if this topic is not touched on previously) Much of what I have read about special education in the juvenile justice system discusses certain roadblocks faced by detention facilities in implementing IEPs. One of the most common is obtaining student records from a student's base school. Have you ever experienced this? If so, how did you handle the situation? Why do you suppose this is so common?
5. Schools within detention centers are held to the same special education standards of typical public schools. As you were once a public school teacher, how would you describe the process of undergoing a special education audit in a public school setting?
6. How is undergoing an audit in a detention center different or similar to an audit in a public school?

Topic: *Sentiments about Her Work*

1. What is the best part about being a special educator in a juvenile detention center?
2. What is the hardest part about being a special educator in a juvenile detention center?
3. If you could use one adjective to describe the function of special education in a juvenile detention center, what would it be?
4. If you could use one adjective to describe your job as a special educator in a juvenile detention center, what would it be?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: Principal (Danny)

Topic: *Career Background*

1. How long have you been an administrator?
2. How long have you worked within the juvenile justice system?
3. How many years have you worked at this center in particular?
4. What influenced your decision to work at a detention center?

Topic: *Views of Special Education and Implementation*

1. What are the values held by the detention center regarding special education?
2. What is the purpose of the special education program within the detention center?
3. What are the main factors (e.g. people, other program structures, rules) that aide in the function and implementation of special education programming?
4. Are there any elements within the facility that seem to work against special education programming?
5. What factors, if any, exist beyond the center's walls that influence special education here?
    -What are the major factors that influence your job that come from beyond the detention center (e.g. policies, parents, LEAs)?

Topic: *Experience with the Special Educator*

1. June recently told me that she actually has a number of titles in the facility (e.g. Title I teacher, sped teacher, Asst. Principal). How would you describe June's role in the detention center?
    -How does June having so many functions in the center affect her role as the special educator?
2. Why was June chosen to have all of these titles? What sets her apart from others?
3. In what ways do you collaborate with June differently than with the other teachers and staff in the building?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Administrative Assistant/Registrar (Emily)

Topic: *Career Background*

1. How long have you worked at Pinewood in this position?
2. What influenced your decision to work at a detention center?

Topic: *Special Education at the Center*

1. In general, what can you tell me about special education (e.g. its purpose, who receives services, who is responsible for carrying out services)?
2. Who in the detention center is responsible for implementing special education services?
   -How do you see this/these individual(s) carrying out these responsibilities?

3. June has told me that you're very involved with record transfer and maintaining rapport with other school districts. Can you tell me about this?
   -How does having some background in sped help you with this job?
   -What is the hardest part about record transfer?

Topic: *Experience with the Special Educator*

1. How would you describe June's role in the detention center?
2. In what ways do you collaborate with June differently than with the other teachers, administrators, and staff in the building?

CHAPTER III

REDUCING RECIDIVISM: TRANSITION AND REENTRY PRACTICES FOR DETAINED AND ADJUDICATED YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Abstract

Youth with disabilities are significantly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, yet they are generally less successful post-release in the domains of recidivism, school completion, and employment as compared to their non-disabled peers. The purpose of this literature review is to identify empirical transition practices that benefit youth with disabilities, who are at a high risk of incarceration and school drop-out. Three types of practices were identified as effective in varying degrees on rates of recidivism and community engagement: the use of transition specialists, education and employment support, and mental health services. The implications for practice include extending transition services post-release, coordinating with outside agencies, and developing individualized programming for youth with disabilities based on their specific needs.

Keywords: transition, reentry, recidivism, community engagement, disability

Reducing Recidivism: Transition and Reentry Practices for Detained and Adjudicated Youth with Disabilities

Historically, the purpose of the juvenile justice system has centered on the protection and rehabilitation of youth in order to help them become productive, law-abiding citizens. Institutions embedded in the juvenile justice system were established to care for young people under the recognition that children and adolescents are susceptible to problems beyond their control that may influence the actions of young people (Suitts, Dunn, & Sabree, 2014). Despite this primary purpose, it has become increasingly evident that interactions between at-risk youth and the justice system can produce collateral consequences that are detrimental not only to youth, but to society at large.

The emphasis on strict and punitive crime policies that began in the1980s and extended through the 90s led to an increase in incarceration of youth, and arguably helped to derail the juvenile justice system from its primary goal of rehabilitation (Mears & Travis, 2004). These crime policies created a movement reliant on incarceration that maximized sentences and reduced rehabilitative and reentry initiatives, thus perpetuating the use of incarceration (Mears & Travis, 2004).

Rutherford, Nelson, and Wolford (1985) asserted that programs in juvenile correctional settings for youth transitioning back into the community during this time were “the most neglected element of correctional education efforts” (p. 68) and stressed the critical need for such programs – particularly for individuals with disabilities. Although the “tough on crime” attitude began three decades ago, its effects persist in the juvenile justice system today (Leone & Fink, 2017), casting shadows on reintegrative

programming such as those focused on helping youth transition out of the justice system and reenter into the community.

Pervasive Effects of Juvenile Delinquency

Youth who enter the juvenile justice system today have a heightened risk of dropping out of school and recidivating. Roughly two-thirds of adjudicated youth do not return to school after their release from the juvenile justice system (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009). Individuals who do not complete high school (or earn an equivalency diploma) are three times more likely to be incarcerated as adults than those who do not drop out (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). Additionally, many face considerable difficulty becoming financially stable throughout their lives (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014; Suitts et al., 2014). In an analysis of U.S. Census data, Suitts and colleagues (2014) reported that individuals who do not complete high school encounter financial hardships today more than ever. Forty years ago, drop-outs were capable of earning more than half of what college graduates earned annually. Today, however, high school drop-outs earn only 30% of a college graduate's earnings and it is projected that this statistic will continue to decline.

Youth with Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System

In order for youth in the juvenile justice system to complete school and become productive members of society, systems of support need to be put in place to assist transition and reentry (i.e., the processes of preparing to exit a secure facility and reintegrate back into the community). This is especially true for youth with disabilities given their prevalence in the justice system. In the general public school population, about 10% of students qualify for special education services (United States Department

of Education [USDOE], 2014). However, this figure increases to between 33% and 41% (with some reports estimating as high as 85%) for detained and incarcerated youth having special education disabilities (Mallett, 2009; National Council on Disability [NCD], 2015; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirier, 2005). The majority of these individuals have emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD), learning disabilities (LD), and intellectual disabilities (Pyle, Flower, Fall, & Williams, 2016).

Mental health disorders are also common amongst adjudicated and detained youth, especially depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hovey, Zolkoski, & Bullock, 2017; Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). These issues are further compounded by disabilities such as LD and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Hovey et al., 2017) and substance abuse (Pyle et al., 2016), and often result in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (Hovey et al., 2017). Additionally, youthful offenders with disabilities commonly have difficulty with social skills which results in their isolation from prosocial peers despite often having higher needs for group affiliation (Pyle et al., 2016).

Further, youth involved in the juvenile justice system typically have higher rates of school mobility - especially if they are “crossover youth” or those involved in multiple systems of care (Leone & Weinberg, 2012). This can cause inconsistencies in their education, which takes a toll on their academic achievement and opportunities to build nurturing relationships with adults and peers (Leone & Weinberg, 2012), all of which affect school engagement (Griffiths, Lilles, Furlong, & Sidhwa, 2012) and successful transition from the justice system (Osgood, Foster, & Cortney, 2010).

Post-Release Outcomes

Anthony et al. (2010) recognize three basic categories of needs for youth returning to school from the juvenile justice system: "1) circumstances related to reintegration into the educational system after disruption, 2) special educational needs related to learning disabilities, and 3) the immediacy of developmentally appropriate re-engagement with academic and/or vocational programs" (pp. 1273-4). At a fundamental level, juvenile incarceration is an interruption to youths' education (for those who are actively enrolled), often resulting in discordances in academic services and progress, record keeping and transfer, and social integration (Anthony et al., 2010). These facets contribute to a mounting friction that slows individuals' academic momentum and likelihood of obtaining a diploma.

A comparison of outcomes. The following is an overview of studies that assessed outcomes for youth released from the juvenile justice system. These studies did not explicitly utilize interventions with detained or incarcerated youth with the intent of improving transition or reentry results but instead examined variables related to these processes.

Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, and Berk (2011) found that youth who demonstrated above average academic achievement while adjudicated were almost 70% more likely to return to school than youth with below-average academic achievement. On the other hand, Cavendish (2014) found that credit attainment – not academic achievement – affected the likelihood of returning to school (note: the average GPA in this study was under 2.0). Although youth with EBD were found less likely to earn a grade promotion during commitment to the justice system, they were more likely to return to school within three years of release as compared to those without disabilities

(52% versus 39%). Further, adjudicated students with LD returned to school at a 55% rate within three years. However, only 8% of the sample ultimately earned a diploma after release (in addition to 9% of individuals who earned a diploma during commitment). Relatedly, youth with EBD and LD were 61% and 82% (respectively) less likely to earn a diploma or GED during their commitment as compared to individuals without disabilities.

Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, and Havel (2002) found that individuals with disabilities were more than two times less likely to be engaged in school or work upon release back into the community from correctional facilities than their non-disabled peers. Youth with disabilities were also nearly three times as likely to return to the juvenile justice system within six months post-release as compared to individuals without disabilities. Those with disabilities who were engaged in education or employment at six months post-release, however, were almost four times more likely to remain engaged at one year post-release and two and a half times less likely to return to the justice system than youth with disabilities who were not engaged in work or school at six months.

These studies highlight the importance of academic achievement, which is often lower for youth with disabilities, and its impact on returning to school. Bullis and colleagues (2002) also demonstrate the role that employment can have in successful reentry.

Regulations on Transition Services

The importance of transition and reentry preparation through educational and vocational opportunities is emphasized in federal legislation like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA;

2004). Still, only eight states reported to the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center (2015) that they offer equal educational and vocational opportunities to incarcerated youth as are provided to their non-adjudicated peers despite legal mandates. In order to uphold federal regulations, it is imperative that we recognize what practices are effective and for whom and ensure that these practices are used widely. Although the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has developed an expansive Model Programs Guide (MPG) for justice-involved and at-risk youth, the MPG does not address the intersectionality between systems-involved youth and those having disabilities. Because youth with disabilities are so prevalent in the juvenile justice system, this review focuses on transition and reentry practices that are appropriate specifically for them.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this review is to: (1) identify evidence-supported practices that benefit youth with disabilities who are transitioning from the juvenile justice system back to their communities and (2) to understand the influence of such practices on youths' community engagement and recidivism. Based on this purpose, the following research questions drove our investigation: (1) What populations of individuals with disabilities are represented in transition practices studies? (2) What practices have been studied in juvenile detention and/or correctional facilities that assist in transitioning youth with disabilities back into their communities? (3) Which practices are associated with lowering rates of recidivism? (4) Which practices are associated with increased community engagement?

Method

Key Definitions

For the purposes of this review, we refer to the *juvenile justice system* as the general state institution that houses youth who are a) awaiting a court date (*detained*) and b) committed (*adjudicated*) to a facility due to criminal activity. To distinguish between detention and correctional settings, we refer to *detention* facilities as those serving individuals who are awaiting a court date or are serving brief sentences. *Correctional* facilities are defined as longer-term institutions for individuals who have been committed by a court, usually for more serious offenses. *Transition* refers to the act of preparing for *reentry*, or a return to the community after detainment or adjudication. *Transition and reentry programming* are the pre- and post-release structures used to facilitate engagement in prosocial activities upon an individual's return to the community. *Community engagement* is the umbrella term used to describe an individual's participation in education (i.e., traditional public schools, alternative schools, GED preparation programs, and post-secondary school), social/emotional support services (e.g., mental health and substance abuse counseling, independent living programs), vocational training, and/or employment after returning to the community from a detention or corrections facility. Finally, *recidivism* is defined as any subsequent re-arrest after release the juvenile justice system. We provide additional details on how the included studies defined these terms in the Results section.

Search and Inclusion Procedures

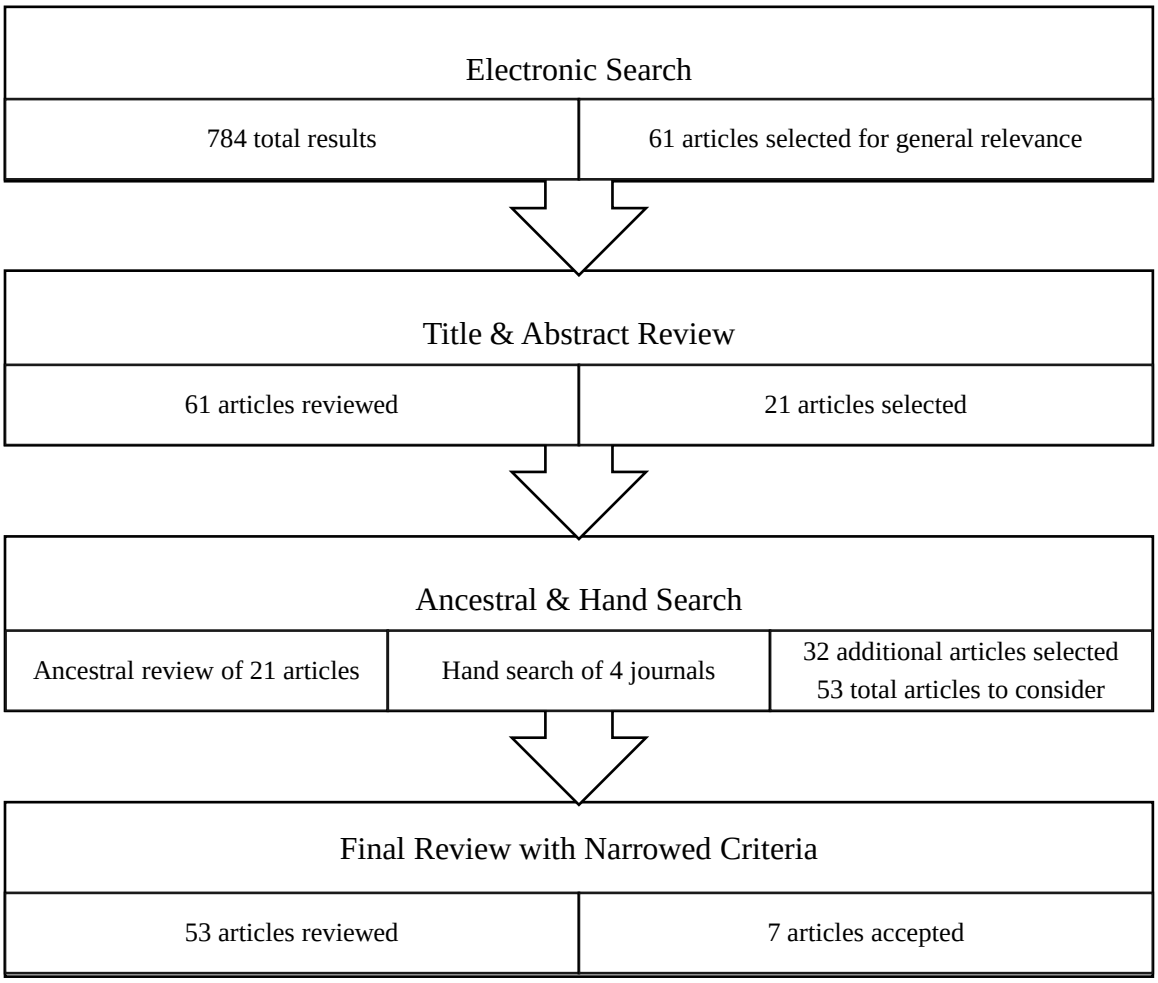
We examined the use of transition and reentry practices between 1985-2017 by way of electronic, ancestral, and hand searches. This time frame was selected in order to

capture transition programing (or the lack thereof) that may have been reflective of punitive changes in the legal system that began in the mid-eighties. The databases used for the electronic search included: Academic Search Complete (469 results), PsycINFO (291 results), and EricProQuest (24 results). The keywords employed in the search were "juvenile," "delinquency," "transition," "reentry," "intervention," and "disabilities." We included only peer-reviewed studies and those written in English. Additionally, studies had to be conducted in the United States due to differences in the juvenile justice legal system between countries. Of the 784 electronic search results, 61 articles were identified for possible inclusion based on general relevance to transition and reentry services, recidivism, and/or community engagement. We reviewed the abstracts and titles of the 61 articles and identified 21 articles that detailed a specific practice, examined predictor variables related to reentry and outcomes, and/or utilized qualitative data to describe transition and reentry practices. Ancestral searches were completed using the reference lists of these 21 articles. Finally, hand searched journals between 1985-2017 included: *Behavioral Disorders*, *Journal of Correctional Education*, *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, and *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. These four journals were selected due to their focus on specific disabilities and issues prominent to juvenile justice. This search procedure resulted in an additional 32 articles. In all, 53 articles were identified for possible inclusion.

To specifically address the research questions, we added the following inclusion criteria: a transition-related practice was initiated in a juvenile detention or correctional setting, the sample was inclusive of individuals with disabilities covered by IDEA (2004),

and the results related to post-release activity. After applying these additional inclusion criteria, a total of seven studies were selected for analysis.

Figure 1.
Search and Inclusion Procedures



Inter-rater reliability for determining which of the initial 53 articles to include was 96% between two raters with two disagreements. Disagreements regarded the inclusion of two additional articles. It was decided they should be excluded as there was no specific evidence that the samples included individuals with special education related disabilities. The majority of the excluded articles focused broadly on issues of transition and reentry, the prevalence of youth with disabilities in detention facilities, and non-

transition practice correlational factors related to recidivism (e.g., a history of running away and substance abuse).

Coding

Two authors independently collected information on each article including: author(s), year, sample characteristics, independent variable (transition or reentry practice), dependent variable, method, and results. Inter-rater reliability was 95% with 11 disagreements out of a possible 230 data points. Disagreements pertained to misreading numbers (e.g., 67% rather than 76%), omitting information (e.g., skipping participants with LD when coding participant characteristics), and methodological debate (e.g., quasi-experimental vs. experimental). Disagreements were resolved through discussion and a mutual review of the studies. Of the seven studies selected, six had samples that included individuals with specific disabilities only (Brier, 1994; Griller Clark, Mathur, & Helding, 2011; Hagner, Malloy, Mazzone, & Cormier, 2008; Karcz, 1996; Unruh, Gau, & Waintrup, 2009; Weisz, Walter, Weiss, Fernandez, & Mikow, 1990) and one study contained a mixed sample of individuals with and without disabilities (Black, Brush, Grow, Hawes, Henry, & Hinkle, 1996). The selected studies used recidivism, often inclusive of risk period (the interval between time of release and any subsequent re-arrest or the conclusion of data collection), and/or community engagement as the dependent variables.

Results

In the following section, we present information regarding the populations of youth with disabilities represented in each of the seven studies. Next, the types of practices used are discussed followed by an examination of the impact of each practice on

recidivism and/or community engagement. Refer to Table 1 for detailed information on design and intervention, dependent variables, and results specific to each study.

Table 1
Participant and Intervention Characteristics

Study	Participants	Design and Intervention	Dependent Variable(s)	Results
Black, Brush, Grow, Hawes, Henry, & Hinkle, (1996)	N = 207 55 qualified for special education services for math and/or language arts related disability	Correlational Transition specialist with academic, career, and/or mental health component Transition specialists established educational transition plans for youth. Students could be enrolled in 3 different tracks: pre-vocational training, academic programming, and/or GED preparation program. Participants were released with a GED certificate, full vocational certificate, and/or a vocational certificate of credit.	Recidivism Community engagement Risk period 6 month interval	*Recidivism* Total sample 76% did not recidivate 10% had charges pending 14% recidivated Subgroup with disabilities 9% had charges pending 20% recidivated *Community engagement* Total sample 36% who earned a vocational certificate of credit were employed 50% who earned a vocational certificate of completion were employed 100% who earned a vocational certificate of completion and a GED were employed 58% who earned a GED only were employed 20% were attending school 20% were employed 13% were in school and employed 23% were not in school or employed, but did not recidivate Subgroup with disabilities 22% were attending school but not employed 15% were employed but not in school 15% were in school and employed 20% were not in school or employed but had no court involvement

Brier (1994)	N = 192 100% had LD or at high risk Completed (n=73) 68 males 63 LD Avg. treatment =166.27 hrs Noncompleted (n=85) 80 males 56 LD Avg. treatment = 39.68 hrs Matched (n=34) 34 males 0 LD	Quasi-experimental Education, career, and mental health support Small groups (4-8 youth) during treatment Education component focused on reading, math, and communication. Psychosocial component focused on problem solving and social and moral reasoning. Vocational component honing career interests, job search skills, and appropriate work behavior.	Recidivism Risk period Intervals varied 6-34 months Average follow-up was 20 months	*Recidivism* 12% of Completed group were re-arrested 40% of Noncompleted group were re-arrested 38% of Matched group were re-arrested Individuals with a prior record had a significantly ($p < .01$) higher likelihood of re-arrest despite group assignment Significantly ($p < .001$) fewer re-arrests for Completed vs. Noncompleted and Matched No significant difference in seriousness of re-arrest, first re-arrest, or number of re-arrests across groups based on the length of time from project completion or criminal justice contact *Survival time* No significant difference for follow-up intervals
Griller Clark, Mathur, & Helding (2011)	N = 144 Treatment (n=68) 62 males, 6 females 37 LD, 31 EBD Avg. length of stay=37 days Non-treatment (n=76) 71 males, 5 females 36 LD, 38 EBD Avg. length of stay=43 days	Quasi-experimental Portfolios and interagency collaboration with transition specialists Portfolios: special ed. rights, IEP, evaluation results, transition plan, resource packet, academic and vocational assessments*, resume*, copies of records*, transcripts*, credit analysis*, certificates*, diplomas or GED*, and work samples* *=Treatment only	Recidivism Risk period Intervals were 15, 30, 45, 60, 90, and 120 days post-release	*Recidivism* Treatment group were 64% less likely to recidivate overall 15 days post-release Treatment group about 64% less likely to recidivate than the non-treatment group ($p = .04$) Older participants had lower chance of recidivism ($p = .03$) 30 days post-release Treatment group continued to have a 64% lower chance of recidivating than the non-treatment group ($p = .04$) *Survival time* No definite conclusions made at or after the 45 day interval and beyond

Hagner, Malloy, Mazzone, & Cormier (2008)	N = 33 27 males, 6 females 21 EBD/psychiatric disability 10 LD 2 Other disability 9 had a secondary disability	Descriptive Transition specialist with academic, career, and/or mental health component Person-centered planning and support from career/education specialist to coordinate services, plan for employment and/or GED or high school completion, and social support services (e.g. mentoring)	Recidivism Community engagement	*Recidivism* 27 participants reentered and remained in the community 4 reentered but reoffended and remained incarcerated 2 participants were planning to reenter but had not yet done so *Community engagement* 67.7% successfully reengaged in education or employment post-release 21 participants were positively engaged and 6 were not 9 returned to their neighborhood high schools 8 opted to study for the GED exam 4 gained employment but did not return to school 4 students completed high school (by obtaining a GED) 2 began taking college classes 20 participants who had not recidivated gained employment
Karcz (1996)	N = 88 76 males, 12 females 100% had a disability Treatment (n=44) Control (n=44)	Experimental A youth reentry specialist coordinated community services for the treatment group to aide post-release enrollment in both vocational and special education programming (e.g., vocational rehabilitation). The goal of the program was to have youth actively enrolled in a program within three months post-release.	Community engagement	*Community engagement (probability of enrollment)* Males with approximately 9 high school credits: Treatment Control AA 39.13% 12.28% AI 8.18% 1.9% W 22.47% 5.94% Males with approximately 5 high school credits: AA 60.06% 24.67% AI 17.25 4.34% W 40.4% 12.86% Males with approximately 1 high school credit: AA 77.87% 43.4% AI 32.78% 9.6% W 61.34% 25.68% Females with approximately 9 high school credits: AA 42.69% 13.96% AI 9.36% 2.2% W 25.12% 6.82% Females with approximately 5 high school credits:

				AA 63.54% 27.51% AI 19.45% 5% W 44% 14.61% Females with approximately 1 high school credit: AA 80.31% 47.05% AI 36.11% 10.96% W 64.77% 28.60%
Unruh, Gau, & Waintrup, (2009)	N = 320 260 males, 60 females 294 had a psychiatric diagnosis 16 had a special education label only 144 had psychiatric and special education labels	Quasi-experimental Transition specialists facilitated three phases: in-facility services, immediate pre/post-release activities, and ongoing community support with wrap-around services including support for post-secondary education, housing, and employment.	Recidivism Community engagement Risk period 12, 24, and 36 month intervals	*Recidivism* Treatment 85% had not recidivated at 12 months 72% had not recidivated at 24 months 62% had not recidivated at 36 months Most recidivism occurred between 10 and 24 months post-release Other predictor variables Those with a history of running away were 2.39x more likely to recidivate 24 months post-release ($p < .001$) Youth receiving mental health services prior to adjudication were less likely to recidivate than those who began services in facility ($p = .007$) *Community engagement* Employment, enrollment, and engagement were not significant predictors of recidivism

Weisz, Walter, Weiss, Fernandez, & Mikow, (1990)	N = 168 Avg. IQ ~72 Short-certification (n=21): 90 days or less Long-certification (n=147): At least one year	Quasi-experimental Case managers coordinated individualized services during detainment that extended post-release until youth aged out or opted out of the program	Recidivism Risk period 100 days and 2 years	*Recidivism* 100 days post-release No significant differences between groups 2 years post-release Short-certification 33% had been arrested 67% survived full 2 years without arrest Long-certification 25% had been arrested 63% survived full 2 years 12% were censored (not in sample for full 2 years)

**Note: LD = Learning Disability; EBD = Emotional Behavioral Disability; AA=African American; W=White; H=Hispanic; AI=American Indian; O=Other*

Represented Populations

The total number of participants included in the seven studies was 1,152 individuals. All but 152 of these participants were described as having a disability or being at high-risk for a disability (as determined by a screening tool for LD; Brier, 1994). The 152 participants not explicitly noted as having a specific disability remain a part of this analysis as their results were not parsed out in the reporting studies. Participants specified as having EBD and/or LD totaled 401 (35% of the combined sample). Two hundred ninety-four participants (26% of the combined sample) were described as having a psychiatric diagnosis. One hundred eighty-nine participants (16% of the combined sample) had comorbid psychiatric diagnoses and EBD or LD. Finally, 116 participants (10% of the combined sample) were noted as having "other" disabilities or as having special education related disorders.

In addition to disability, the age span for studies reporting age (n=4) was 14 to18.5 years old. Five studies noted participants' gender, of which 87% were male and 13% were female. Finally, three studies highlighted important characteristics on their samples. Brier (1994) included only individuals with fewer than two arrests, nonviolent crimes, no history of psychiatric illness, and no severe drug problems. On the other hand, Weisz et al. (1990) included only seriously emotionally disturbed individuals with histories of violent behavior. Last, Karcz (1996) noted that 41% of the sample had been suspended at least twice and 55% attended school less than 90% of school days prior to their arrests.

Transition and Reentry Practices

Among the studies examined, three general practices were revealed: the use of transition or reentry specialists (henceforth called "transition specialists") (*n*=6); academic and/or vocational programming (*n*=3); and mental health and/or psychosocial services (*n*=2). Four studies are double-counted because they combined transition practices. Specifically, Black et al. (1996) and Hagner et al. (2008) used transition specialists and academic/vocational programming, Weisz et al. (1990) used transition specialists and mental health programming, and Brier (1994) employed academic/vocational and psychosocial services.

Transition specialists. Studies emphasizing the transition specialist model included: Karcz (1996), Griller Clark et al. (2011), and Unruh et al. (2009). Karcz's (1996) experimental transition practice, the Youth Reentry Specialist (YRS) research project, utilized a transition specialist to transition students with disabilities from an institutional school in a correctional facility into special education and vocational programs within three months of their release from state care. The YRS was an individual charged with implementing special education transition procedures; facilitating connections between vocational, educational, and job-related agencies; and providing guidance to parents, parole officers, students, and related personnel once a post-release placement was attained. The success of this practice was gauged by the rate of student enrollment in a formal special education or vocational program within three months of release from the juvenile justice facility.

In their quasi-experimental study, Griller Clark et al. (2011) implemented transition practices at two juvenile detention facilities involving the use of transition specialists who: collaborated with outside agencies to align post-release services, helped

establish individual transition plans for youth, and worked with youth to create transition portfolios. The "Enhanced Transition" treatment group worked with transition specialists to create portfolios with 13 total products, whereas the "Basic Transition" non-treatment group created portfolios containing only five products. Individuals in the Basic Transition group met only twice with their transition specialists, while those in the Enhanced group met regularly. The study measured rates of recidivism, defined as a return to a detention facility due to: a court referral, hold, or warrant; a probation violation; or a hold for a separate jurisdiction.

Unruh et al. (2009) implemented Project SUPPORT (*S*ervice *U*tilization to *P*romote the *P*ositive *R*ehabilitation and Community *T*ransition of Incarcerated Youth with disabilities; Unruh & Bullis, 2005) using a quasi-experimental format in a correctional facility. Transition specialists established individual transition plans with input from youth and their parole officers in order to coordinate individualized pre- and post-release services (e.g., substance abuse treatment, vocational rehabilitation, school enrollment, housing) with ongoing community support through interagency collaboration. The results examined recidivism (defined as any additional offense committed after release from the correctional facility), and were compared to a statewide longitudinal study that examined outcomes for youth with and without disabilities who were released from juvenile corrections (Bullis et al., 2002).

Impact on recidivism. Griller Clark et al. (2011) and Unruh et al. (2009) used logistical regression to evaluate the potential for recidivism based on numerous factors in addition to treatment. For Griller Clark and colleagues, participants receiving the treatment were statistically significantly less likely (p=.04) to recidivate than their peers

one month after release. Ultimately 66% of the treatment group recidivated by three months post-release (whereas 87% of the non-treatment group recidivated). Conversely, 62% of the Project SUPPORT (Unruh et al., 2009) treatment group remained in their communities at 36 months post-release. However, it is important to recognize that the intervention used by Griller Clark and colleagues was executed in a detention facility whereas Project SUPPORT (Unruh et al., 2009) was utilized in a corrections facility thus enabling participants in Project SUPPORT extended time in the program.

Impact on community engagement. Karcz (1996) used community engagement as the sole dependent variable. With a logit regression model, Karcz assessed the likelihood of participant enrollment in special education and vocational programming within three months post-release in addition to examining the influence of demographic factors and levels of obtained high school credit. Overall, individuals receiving YRS services had a 76% probability of successful enrollment.

Transition specialist with academic, career, and/or mental health component. Three studies combined the use of transition specialists with academic, career support, and/or mental health programming. Black and colleagues (1996) conducted a correlational program evaluation with individuals who were enrolled in academic preparation and pre-vocational programming or a GED preparation program during commitment in a correctional facility. The authors examined the relationship between what participants earned (i.e., a GED, a vocational certificate of completion, and/or a vocational certificate of credit) and their outcomes in the community related to recidivism, education, and employment (operational definitions were not provided).

Transition specialists followed up with participants through their probation and aftercare counselors at six months post-release.

Hagner and colleagues (2008) describe results from the Nashua Youth Reentry Project that was conducted over a three year period. The practice followed a reentry model implemented by a career and education specialist "guided by an interagency steering committee" (p. 241) that focused on high school completion, career preparation, interagency coordination, and social support through mentoring for youth in detention who were detained or adjudicated for at least two weeks. Services were selected based on the needs and aspirations of the individual and extended post-release. Results were based on post-release engagement, defined as: regular school attendance, engagement in a formal GED preparation program, employment of 15 hours a week or more, or enrollment in formal work search activities.

The Willie M. Program (Weisz et al., 1990; Behar, 1985) was executed in a quasi-experimental format and focused mainly on mental health and psychosocial services in multiple long-term juvenile justice facilities. The program made use of case managers to design appropriate programming to engage participants in any number of the 20 categories of mental health services made available during and after adjudication. Two groups were included in the study, both of which received treatment services but for varying amounts of time. The first group participated in the program for less than 90 days and were thus coined the "short certification" group. The second group received services for a minimum of one year and was labeled the "long certification" group. Results examined recidivism, or any re-arrest, including survival time or the amount of time between concluding involvement in the program and arrest.

Impact on recidivism. Black and colleagues (1996) found that at six months post-release, 76% of the general sample had not recidivated but rates of recidivism for the special education subgroup were higher. However, Hagner et al. (2008) had more positive results for individuals with disabilities. At the conclusion of the three year follow-up, 27 of the 31 participants who had reentered their communities did not recidivate. For the group comparison in Weisz et al. (1990), it was determined that the short certification group had a higher rate of recidivism. By the conclusion of the two year risk period, 33% of the short certification group had been re-arrested while 25% of the long certification group had been re-arrested.

Impact on community engagement. Black et al. (1996) found that at six months post-release, 53% of the total sample was engaged and 23% were not engaged, but did not recidivate. Results for the special education subgroup were comparable. The Nashua Tree Youth Reentry Project (Hagner et al., 2008) demonstrated a 67.7% success rate for community engagement by the end of the third year of data collection. Participants who were actively engaged either returned to school, took the GED exam, and/or were employed. By the completion of year three, 74.1% of the participants who had not recidivated were employed.

Education, career, and mental health support. One study did not use transition specialists but instead employed an academic, vocational, and mental health community-based diversion program as a condition of adjudication for participants with LD. Brier (1994) utilized a quasi-experimental design with small group educational, psychosocial, and vocational practices and examined the effects among three different groups of individuals. One group completed the full treatment ("Completed" group).

The second group attended some treatment sessions but did not complete the program ("Noncompleted" group). Finally, a third group was comprised of individual profiles that were collected to create a matched group based on the "prototypical project participant" (Brier, 1994, p. 218). The study measured recidivism, which was defined as any subsequent arrest or juvenile/criminal justice involvement. Survival time, or the amount of time between arrests, was also examined.

Impact on recidivism. Results for Brier (1994) indicated that the Completed group had significantly ($p < .001$) fewer re-arrests than the Noncompleted and Matched groups. Specifically, only 12% of the Completed group recidivated whereas 40% and 38% of the Noncompleted and Matched groups (respectively) faced re-arrest.

Discussion

Over time, we can see that investigations of transition and reentry interventions have progressed. Although there are a limited number of studies and designs varied in rigor from correlational to experimental without true no-treatment control groups (due to ethical and logistical reasons), there are indications of positive influences. In comparing the results of these practices to the no-treatment studies such as Bullis et al. (2002) – mirroring the method of Unruh et al. (2009) – we find trends that are indicative of the positive influence rehabilitative services can have on youth with disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system.

Transition Specialists

Previous researchers argue that for transition and reentry programs to be successful, interagency collaboration and pre- and post-incarceration considerations are necessary (Baltodano, Platt, & Roberts, 2005; Rutherford et al., 1985). Based on our

analysis, we agree with these assertions that pre-and post-interagency partnerships are key to the transition and reentry processes. Further, we found that transition specialists are an integral to this practice.

An important element within transition and reentry services appears to be individualization. The value of individualized services with the support of transition specialists is particularly evident in the studies by Unruh et al. (2009) and Hagner et al. (2008). Project SUPPORT (Unruh et al., 2009) resulted in half the rate of recidivism at one year post-release compared to the Bullis et al. (2002) study that tracked individuals who underwent a "business as usual" model. At two years post-release the participants in Unruh and colleague's study still had a lower recidivism rate than those at the one year mark in Bullis et al.'s study. Similarly, participants with disabilities in Hagner and colleagues' study achieved twice the level of community engagement and half the recidivism rate at a risk period three times longer than Bullis and colleagues' (2002) one year follow-up.

Individualization is also evident in the study by Griller Clark and colleagues (2011). Although the recidivism rate was higher overall in this study as compared to Hagner et al. (2008) and Unruh et al. (2009), it is important to recognize that the transition specialists worked with students in short-term facilities. In that time, the transition specialists developed permanent products (i.e., work and community resource portfolios) with residents that enabled them to reenter their communities with tangible resources. Considering the limited time practitioners have with students in detention settings, this is a valuable practice.

Despite provisions in IDEA (2004) regarding secondary transition for youth with disabilities, research indicates that most justice facilities are not providing comprehensive services. For instance, according to the CSG Justice Center (2015), "only one-quarter of states analyze outcome data by student characteristics other than demographics to determine whether youth with specific service needs… are developing the academic and workforce development skills for a successful transition back to the community" (p. 8). Further, justice facilities in only 20 states report if youth enroll in a public school once released, just 17 states collect enrollment information for GED programs, and a mere 13 states collect data on job training program enrollment (CSG Justice Center, 2015). Unless justice facilities report this information to state agencies, accountability to IDEA (2004) is limited and fallible. It is for this reason that we reiterate the importance of individualized transition and reentry planning.

Further, the CSG Justice Center (2015) found that in close to half of states "no single government agency is responsible for ensuring that incarcerated youth transition successfully to an educational or vocational setting in the community upon release" (p. 11). Only one fifth of states utilize transition specialists for this purpose (CSG Justice Center, 2015), making the call for this practice even more pertinent.

Adjudicated youth with disabilities can experience post-release success if they are given support from the time they are incarcerated through at least one year after their release. During this year, which is arguably the most critical time of the reentry phase, youth who establish positive habits (e.g., attending school and working) are less likely to return to the justice system (Bullis et al., 2002). Inter-agency collaboration guided by a transition specialist can be used to develop a support team for youth, connecting them to

academic, employment, and mentorship resources in turn lessens the risk of recidivism and promotes community engagement.

Moreover, the use of transition specialists lends itself to establishing relationships between youth and reliable adults. Osgood, Foster, and Courtney (2010) recognize positive interpersonal relationships as a leading variable that contributes to a lower likelihood of re-offending. Baltodano, Mathur, and Rutherford (2005) further note that "the importance of adult support and mentoring is critical for successful transition from corrections" (p. 120). Because the juvenile justice system cannot control the environment to which adjudicated youth return, transition specialists become positive influences that these individuals may otherwise go without.

Engagement in Education and Employment

The CSG Justice Center (2015) found that only 13 states offer "incarcerated youth with access to the same types of educational services available to youth in the community, including credit recovery programs, GED preparation, and postsecondary courses" (p. 3). Additionally, only 9 states admitted to providing "the same types of vocational services available to youth in the community, including work-based learning opportunities, career and technical education courses, and the opportunity to earn vocational certifications" (p. 3). It may come as no surprise then that on average, less than 20% of the entire population of adjudicated youth earns a diploma or a GED (Farn & Adams, 2016).

Given the high dropout rate, the education that these individuals receive while incarcerated is often the last official academic opportunity they will have before adulthood (Baltodano et al., 2005). Thus, it is critical that the time youth spend

institutionalized be productive. Hagner et al. (2008) suggest that "[a]lternative educational programming – including structured [GED] preparation and community-based options for earning high school credit… can provide a viable path to high school completion for youth who would otherwise drop out of school" (p. 241). For instance, classes that link individuals with real-world experiences help build meaningful connections and learning opportunities as students gain credits towards graduation (Cavendish, 2014). Further, credit recovery programs are often offered online to enable schedule flexibility and are designed to support individuals who are behind in school earn credits in a short amount of time (CSG Justice Center, 2015). Decisions regarding academics should be made based on the individual with the goal of adequately preparing each youth to continue his or her education or enter the workforce upon release from the justice system.

We found that support for employment and the attainment of a GED increased the chances of community engagement through employment. Black and colleagues (1996) reported that individuals who earned a GED or vocational certificate of completion were more likely to be employed than other participants. Similarly, of all the participants in the Hagner et al. (2008) study, only those who earned a GED obtained a school diploma.

Although Blomberg et al. (2011) found that adjudicated youth with above-average academic achievement during confinement were close to 70% more likely to return to school than those with below-average achievement, overall juvenile justice involved youth often have below-average academic standings (Cavendish, 2014). Pursuing a GED while detained may actually benefit individuals who have experienced academic difficulties more so than returning to school, as is demonstrated in the studies by Black et

al. (1996) and Hagner and colleagues (2008). Furthermore, Nance (2016) explains that difficulty with reintegrating into social networks can also hinder a youth's ability to acclimate and succeed in school. Leone, Meisel, and Drakeford (2002) affirm that "correctional education programs in long-term facilities need to provide…GED preparation and testing for students not likely to return to public schools" (p. 47).

Mental Health Services

Considering that a significant number of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have mental health disorders (Leone & Weinberg, 2012), mental health and psychosocial practices are all the more pertinent. Mears and Travis (2004) note that in addition to academic standing, mental health and "maturity of returning young offenders may dramatically affect their transitions back into schools or their success in applying for employment" (p. 11).

Mental health and psychosocial services have distinct benefits for adjudicated youth with varying types of disabilities. For instance, Brier (1994) utilized a group program with participants who had LD whereas Weisz et al. (1990) employed individualized services for youth with more severe emotional and cognitive disabilities. The results of both studies (i.e., Brier, 1994 and Weisz et al., 1990) are indicative of the benefits of mental health practices and a testament that the longer an individual participates in the program the less likely he or she is to recidivate. Notably, the recidivism rate at double the risk period was 15% lower for Weisz et al.'s long-term certification group than that of Bullis et al.'s sample. This result is in spite of the fact that only 53% of individuals had disabilities in the Bullis et al. study.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to the conclusions of our review. First, a limited number of studies have been conducted in this area, of which methodological rigor varied considerably. Although descriptive and correlational work is informative, causal conclusions cannot be made from such research.

Next, patterns of recidivism may vary not only based on the practice but on the participants and the setting (i.e., long- versus short-term facilities). For instance, Unruh et al. (2009) examined measures of social adjustment and found that a history of running away was positively correlated with an increased likelihood of recidivism among released adjudicated youth. Thus, additional participant characteristics besides disabilities should be considered when determining the efficacy of practices. Additionally, as practitioners have only a limited time with students in detention facilities as compared to correctional settings, it is important to note that practices employed in detention centers may have been less effective as a result.

Last, identifying which specific practices affect recidivism and community engagement remain a challenge as many of the studies we reviewed utilized multi-component interventions. To this end, we cannot be certain which individual components had the greatest influence on recidivism and community engagement.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

Although there are innumerable variables to consider when designing transition and reentry programming for adjudicated youth with disabilities, there are certain practices that should be utilized. We also recognize the responsibility of state departments in establishing appropriate policies that align with IDEA (2004) to guide

practitioners in designing appropriate transition programming for adjudicated and detained youth with disabilities.

Implications for Practitioners

In a systematic review examining in-school variables that predicted post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities, Test and colleagues (2009) found that a number of factors positively influence future engagement in education, independent living, and/or employment. The following are among the variables that Test et al. established as effective that are relevant to juvenile justice settings: interagency collaboration, social skills training, parental or family involvement, independent living skills training, and vocational education. In order to best prepare youth to return to their communities, it is important to incorporate as many of these factors as possible into the transition and reentry planning processes.

To begin, services should be tailored to the individual beginning at the time of institutionalization. Transition specialists and/or special educators should develop goals with students and families related to education, vocation, and independent living in accordance with IDEA (2004). All goals should be supported by a transition plan that is enacted by a transition (or IEP) team. When developing a plan, individual's educational and employment aspirations, academic standing, mental health, and social needs should be considered as youth buy-in is vital to the plan's success (Griller Clark, Mathur, Brock, O'Cummings, & Milligan, 2016).

Next, we encourage the coordination of outside services prior to a youth's release and the continuation of services with a transition specialist for at least a year post-release. Doing so will help establish a network of resources (e.g., mental health, academic, and

employment services) that can foster positive engagement once individuals return to their communities, as well as connect youth to reliable adults. For practitioners working in short-term facilities who have a smaller window to connect students with outside resources, it may be helpful to create portfolios inclusive of a resume, cover letter, and community resources for employment, tutoring, and independent living (Griller Clark et al., 2011). Transition specialists should allocate time to working with students one-on-one to thoroughly explain the included information and permit students an opportunity to ask questions that they may not ask in front of their peers.

Finally, although returning to school "is effective in reducing youth's involvement in crime because it provides not only academic remediation, but social services, recreational programs, and mentoring opportunities" (Farn & Adams, 2016, p. 6), we recognize that doing so does not guarantee success. Given the high drop-out risk for adjudicated youth with disabilities, we emphasize earning a GED and vocational training as alternatives to opening pathways of post-release engagement through employment for those who are less likely to stay in school.

Implications for Policy

Because of the low accountability to IDEA (2004) that exists in the juvenile justice system, particularly with regard to transition services (CSG Justice Center, 2015; Leone & Fink, 2017), it is important to establish policies that will foster change. Juvenile justice personnel should be required by the state to report the pre- and post-release enrollment of youth in: a) educational programming (e.g., traditional or GED); b) mental health programming (e.g., counseling for substance abuse and trauma); c) vocational opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships and certification training); and d) community services

(e.g., independent living and mentorships). Data should be collected on the results of these practices with regard to length and frequency of involvement, diploma and certification attainment, and recidivism. Based on this data, state juvenile justice departments and state education agencies should make program and planning recommendations specific to short- and long-term facilities.

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CHAPTER IV

EXAMINING THE EFFICACY OF A WRITING INTERVENTION WITH ADJUDICATED YOUTH WORKING TOWARDS A GED

Abstract

Students in the juvenile justice system, especially those with disabilities, are at heightened risk for dropping out of school due to a plethora of factors including academic struggles. A viable alternative to earning a standard high school diploma for this population is earning a general equivalency diploma, or GED. A multiple baseline across participants design was used to examine the relationship between a writing intervention and youth offenders' achievement on the GED Reasoning through Language Arts essay subtest. Visual analysis of the results demonstrated that, overall, participants had achieved mastery of the writing strategy with gains made on the GED essay test. Implications are discussed for the strategy's generalization to the GED, contextual factors that may have influenced variability in the results, and key instructional components that are important to consider in juvenile justice settings.

Examining a Writing Intervention with Adjudicated Youth Working Towards a GED

Fewer than 20% of individuals who have been incarcerated have high school diplomas or general equivalency diplomas (GEDs; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). In an effort to improve outcomes for at-risk students, the federal government mandates that Title I agencies coordinate services so that marginalized students, such as those who are adjudicated, are supported and encouraged to graduate from high school (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015). In order for this to happen in juvenile justice facilities, "correctional education programs in long-term facilities need to provide… GED preparation and testing for students not likely to return to public schools" (Leone, Meisel, & Drakeford, 2002, p. 47).

Youth who are released from the juvenile justice system and regularly attend school are less likely to recidivate than those who drop out (Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, & Berk, 2011). To this end, Farn and Adams (2016) stated that "education is effective in reducing youth's involvement in crime because it provides not only academic remediation, but social services, recreational programs, and mentoring opportunities" (p. 6), thus increasing an individual's engagement in the community and lowering the risk of delinquency. However, returning to school from the juvenile justice system does not necessarily lead to earning a diploma, as demonstrated by findings that an estimated two-thirds of formerly adjudicated youth drop out of school upon release from a secure setting (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009).

An Alternative to Returning to School

Interviews with adjudicated youth who attempted to return to school upon release from secure custody revealed that, for some, school proved too difficult for reasons such

as returning in the middle of the semester and feeling distracted (Hagner, Malloy, Mazzone, & Cormier, 2008). Mears and Travis (2004) explained that difficulty with reintegrating into social networks can also hinder a youth's ability to acclimate and succeed in school. They further noted that "the mental health, educational status, and maturity of returning young offenders may dramatically affect their transitions back into schools" (Mears & Travis, 2004, p. 11).

Instead of completing high school in a traditional way, Hagner and colleagues (2008) stressed that "alternative educational programming – including structured [GED] preparation… can provide a viable path to high school completion for youth who would otherwise drop out of school" (p. 241). Black et al. (1996) demonstrated that individuals who were released from secure custody after earning a GED while detained had higher rates of positive engagement (e.g., working) in their communities than their peers who had not graduated. Participants who earned GEDs also had a lower likelihood of recidivism than those who did not earn diplomas. Nutall, Hollman, and Staley (2003) revealed similar findings in their study of adult offenders who earned a GED during incarceration, noting that the likelihood of recidivism decreased particularly among the youngest offenders (under the age of 21).

Unfortunately, Cavendish (2014) found that only 9% of a sample of over 4,000 adjudicated youth earned a diploma of any kind during their time in secure custody. Further, students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) and learning disabilities – who are highly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan, & Leone, 2009) – were 61% and 82% less likely (respectively) to earn a diploma during their commitment. Of the entire subsample who did obtain diplomas, 86% did so

by earning a GED, emphasizing the value of this option during adjudication. However, there is more to earning a GED than just taking the exam: one must acquire necessary academic skills.

Writing Competencies & Strategies

Although it is well-documented that youth who are serving time often struggle academically – particularly with regard to literacy (Pyle, Flower, Fall, & Williams, 2016), the majority of the existing research examines reading skills and interventions (Green, Shippen, & Fores, 2018). Examinations of writing competencies and strategies for adjudicated youth are largely absent from the literature (Green et al., 2018; Rogers-Adkinson, Melloy, Stuart, Fletcher, & Rinaldi, 2008). Green and colleagues (2018) compared the writing skills of ninth- and tenth-grade students who were adjudicated based on their achievement on the ACT QualityCore English EOC assessment. They found that, overall, the writing competencies of the sample were significantly lower than the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011), which alarmingly indicated that 20% and 21% of eighth- and 12th-grade non-adjudicated students (respectively) were unable to write at a basic level. Further, when comparing the subsample of students who qualified for special education to those who did not, the researchers found that the mean score for writing mechanics was 10 points lower for the special education students. There was also an 11-point disparity between these groups for written expression.

Foley (2001) also reported that adjudicated youth have significantly lower aptitudes in writing than their non-adjudicated peers, particularly on standardized measures. Because there is an expository essay subtest of the GED, it is imperative that

students be prepared well enough to pass. Further, it is important that students learn to write in a way that is generalizable beyond a standardized test, such as writing for employment or post-secondary education courses (Green et al., 2018), in order for their goals to remain in sight (Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2008). Although tactics like self-regulated strategy development (SRSD; Graham & Harris, 1989) have been efficacious with struggling writers and even those taking the previous version of the GED (Berry & Mason, 2012), it requires ample teacher training and student instruction in order to be utilized with integrity. The amount of time and professional development opportunities that are needed for adequate teacher training in addition to student instruction can pose issues in secure settings (Gagnon, Read, & Gonsoulin, 2015; Mathur & Shoenfeld, 2010).

Writing instruction in juvenile justice settings. Garwood (2018) conducted a review of literacy interventions (i.e., targeting reading and/or writing skills) utilized with students with EBD between 1986-2016. Although Garwood identified 63 studies for the review, only four took place in juvenile justice facilities. Moreover, all four studies utilized a reading intervention, thus underscoring the need for research on writing interventions in this setting.

Juvenile justice facilities are often limited in what and how they can instruct students due to a multitude of factors (e.g., funds, security; Leone, Krezmien, Mason, & Meisel, 2005; Rogers-Adkinson et al., 2008). Additionally, secure settings tend to be transient, frequently limiting the amount of time teachers have to spend with students – particularly in short-term detention facilities (Foley, 2001). Further, instructors in secure settings are often overburdened with planning for an age-, grade-, and ability-range of students and have limited time and resources for professional development (Gagnon,

Read, & Gonsoulin, 2015; Leone & Fink, 2017). For these reasons, writing interventions used in secure settings must be implemented effectively under such circumstances.

The Essay Test-Taking Strategy. A strategy that has been effective with struggling writers with and without disabilities is the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (Hughes, Schumker, & Deshler, 2005; Therrien, Hughes, & Kapeleski, 2009). It uses the acronym ANSWER to guide students through a six-step process from analyzing a prompt to essay execution and review and it was designed in part to minimize instructional time needed for teachers. Instructional components include direct instruction, modeling, and immediate feedback (Therrien et al., 2009). The strategy has been utilized with middle school-aged students with learning disabilities (Therrien et al., 2009) and postsecondary students with developmental disabilities (Woods-Groves, Hughes, Therrien, Hendrickson, & Shaw, 2012; Woods-Groves, Therrien, Hua, & Hendrickson, 2012) to improve the quality and organization of their writing on expository essay prompts.

Benefits of goal-setting. In describing limitations of the study by Woods-Groves, Hughes, et al. (2012), in which the Essay Test-Taking strategy was utilized with post-secondary students, Woods-Groves, Therrien, and colleagues (2012) speculated that "the lack of individual writing goals" (p. 133) may have inhibited student generalization on the final two steps of the strategy (i.e., writing the essay based on an outline and reviewing one's work). When Woods-Groves, Therrien, and colleagues (2012) paired the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with individual goal-setting for paragraphs written, they found that participants wrote longer essays.

Schunk (2003) noted that goal-setting is a technique that can be used to promote self-efficacy through self-evaluation and progress monitoring during writing. He further

stated that "specificity, proximity, and difficulty" (Schunk, 2003, p. 163) are the three most important attributes when setting performance goals. Specificity refers to establishing a goal that is specific rather than generic (e.g., "Add three details" versus "Write more"). Proximity means that the goal is attainable in a brief period of time (i.e., short-term goal). Finally, Schunk acknowledges that "difficulty is important because people expend greater effort to attain a difficult goal than an easier one. [However] people do not attempt to attain what they believe is impossible" (p. 164). Thus, goals should be within a student's zone of proximal development in order to motivate the student while maintaining progress.

Purpose and Research Questions

Because of the various impediments faced by juvenile justice facilities (e.g., student transience) and the fact that students with disabilities represent as much as an estimated 85% of the population (National Council on Disability [NCD], 2015), it is important that any writing intervention utilized be easy to teach and proven effective with populations of struggling learners. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gauge the effectiveness of a writing intervention that utilizes components of SRSD (e.g., goal-setting), but can be taught in a brief period time, and to understand its effectiveness on the GED for students in the juvenile justice system. The following questions were used to guide this research:

1. What are the effects of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (Hughes et al., 2005; Therrien et al., 2009) with goal-setting on youth offenders' essay writing skills?

2. Will goal-setting and mastery of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy improve the quality of youth offenders' "Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA) Extended Response" GED essays?

Method

Site and Participants

This study was conducted at the Pinewood Juvenile Detention Facility (PJDC)[2] in a mid-Atlantic state after receiving Institutional Review Board approval, guardian consent, and participant assent. PJDC was a 40-bed facility that hosted three different programs. The first was a short-term detention program in which students were detained for an average of two weeks. The second program was a post-disposition program (Post-D) intended for youths who were sentenced by the court to remain in custody for 90 to 180 days. Finally, the third was a community placement program (CPP) designed to help more serious youthful offenders transition from an extended sentence back into the community. Students were sent to this program from long-term facilities around the state and remained at PJDC for 3 to 12 months prior to their release. There were four living units in PJDC; students in Post-D and CPP lived in separate units.

In order to participate in this research, students first needed to be enrolled in the Post-D or CPP programs and be committed for the duration of data collection (8 weeks). Additionally, participants needed to be identified as struggling writers, as indicated by state standardized reading and writing test scores and the GED practice test, and actively working towards or considering taking the GED. Four students were ultimately identified by the special education teacher and principal at PJDC based on state

[2] Site and student names are pseudonyms

standardized test scores, high school credit attainment, age-qualification to take the GED (16 years or older), and scores on the GED RLA practice test. All four students were described as being at-risk for dropping out of school by PJDC's special educator and principal. See Table 1 for participant demographic information.

Table 1
Student Demographics

Student	Gender	Age	Grade	Credits Earned*	Writing Score+	Reading Score+	GED Practice^	Disability	Program
Raphael	Male	17	11	3	Never taken	308	142	EBD ADHD	CPP
Mikey	Male	17	10	3.5	360	360	139	BD ADHD	CPP
Leo	Male	17	10	6	Never taken	308	144	ND	CPP
Donny	Male	16	10	4.5	322	351	140	ND	Post-D

Notes: *Students needed 22 credits to graduate with a standard diploma
+ Based on students' most recent state standardized test scores (400-600 qualified as passing)
^ A score of 145 was the lowest possible passing score on the GED RLA practice test
EBD = Emotional or behavioral disorder, BD = Bipolar disorder, ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ND = None documented
CPP = Community placement program, Post-D = Post-disposition program

Establishing and Maintaining Rapport

Research has demonstrated that students generally, and juvenile offenders in particular, need to feel a sense of physical and emotional security in order to progress academically (Osher, Penkoff, Sidana, & Kelly, 2016). Prior to approaching Raphael, Mikey, Donny, and Leo to participate in this research I attempted to establish relationships with each of them. To do this, I provided guidance in creating resumes, tutored them in social studies, math, and science, and spent time with them in their art and physical education classes. Engaging in these activities with the students likely contributed to their feeling supported. Throughout the study itself, I began every session by engaging the students in a conversation about how their day or week had been so far. I allowed students to vent when they felt overwhelmed, fostering a sense of emotional safety, and permitted students to listen to music of their choice at the conclusion of every session to encourage feelings of autonomy in a setting where they typically had very little. Further, participants occasionally asked me to spend additional time with them during leisure or class activities (e.g., watching a movie, playing ping-pong) to which I agreed when time permitted in order to continue building the rapport we had established.

During the study, I collected anecdotal information based on conversations with the students and other noteworthy factors (e.g., schedule changes, fights). Because the context of this research (i.e., a juvenile detention facility) was a contributing factor of its design, I maintained this daily log in order to document the conditions under which the study took place.

Materials

Instructional materials included a computer with a word processing program, lined paper for students to outline their essays, a pencil, a timer, a paper copy of the writing strategy, and paper copies of essay prompts (11 total). I collected 14 writing prompts that were released by the GED Testing Service or that were a component of a GED study program and were applicable to the updated 2014 GED test. Prompts consisted of one to two brief reading passages in which two sides of an issue were conveyed and which required students to decide which argument was better presented and why.

The prompts were reviewed by two experts (both were high school English teachers, one with a master's degree in secondary English instruction and special education and the other with a doctorate in curriculum and instruction). After reviewing the original 14 prompts, the experts eliminated three prompts due to their being of higher or lesser rigor than the other 11 prompts. I then verified with the special education teacher and principal at PJDC that the participants had not previously worked with the remaining 11 prompts.

Dependent Measures

I evaluated participants' essays using two rubrics and three variables related to goal-setting. The first rubric was used to gauge students' adherence to the Essay Test-Taking Strategy. The second rubric was used to determine if the writing strategy rubric generalized to the GED RLA Extended Response subtest rubric. Finally, I introduced the goal-setting component during intervention to help students self-assess their work and to motivate participants in their writing.

Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric. The first dependent variable was performance on the Essay Test-Taking Strategy rubric (Therrien et al., 2009; see Appendix A). Therrien and colleagues developed the rubric to examine student acquisition of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy. The rubric had six components that corresponded directly with each of the strategy steps and substeps to assess participants' utilization and mastery of the strategy. Participants had the opportunity to earn up to six points per essay on this rubric which included assessments of students' prompt evaluations, outlines, and essay responses.

Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric. The Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric for the RLA Extended Response essay portion of the GED was used to evaluate student essays as well. The rubric was developed for the purposes of assessing the RLA Extended Response GED essay (American Council on Education, 2015) and was the exact rubric by which GED test takers were scored for this subtest. The rubric was used to evaluate three traits: (a) Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence; (b) Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure; and (c) Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions. Each trait was scored on a three-point scale ranging from 0 to 2 enabling participants to earn a total of 6 points, and included explicit descriptors of what each score entailed for a specific trait. See Appendix B to view the rubric.

Variables measured in goal-setting. Three variables that measured writing quality that were not captured by the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric were selected to promote goal-setting. These variables were chosen because they were acknowledged as being important factors for students to consider when constructing GED essay responses, as noted in the Answer Guidelines released by the GED Testing Service (American

Council on Education, 2015). These variables, which measured essay length and conventions, included: number of words written, number of complete paragraphs, and number of transition words and phrases.

Number of words written. Because participant essays were typed, the number of words written was determined through a word processor. The GED Testing Service noted that essays earning passing scores typically spanned 300-500 words (American Council on Education, 2015). Because spelling was not counted against students on the GED (American Council on Education, 2015), misspelled words were included in the total word count.

Number of complete paragraphs. A complete paragraph consisted of three to seven sentences (a sentence needed to be a complete thought beginning with a capital letter and including a subject, a verb, and ending punctuation; run-on sentences were only counted as one sentence) and a blank line separating it from other lines of text. Indentation was not considered as students were not able to indent in the software used on the actual GED test. The GED Testing Service suggested that for prompts to be answered thoroughly, essays should consist of four to seven complete paragraphs (American Council on Education, 2015).

Number of transition words and phrases. Transition words (e.g., "First" used to mark sequence) and phrases (e.g., "To the contrary" to signal juxtaposition) that were used "to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas" (American Council on Education, 2015, p. 3) were counted throughout each essay. However, transitions needed to be employed logically to be counted. For instance, if a participant wrote "First" and then began the following sentence with "Third," the word "Third" did not count as an

appropriate transition. However, if the word "First" was used to properly denote a beginning point, it was still counted as a transition word regardless of the misuse of the following transition (i.e., "Third").

Social validity. At the conclusion of each participant's final day of data collection, students were asked to complete a social validity questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of seven items to be answered via Likert-type ratings ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The purpose of the survey was to gauge students' perspectives on the Essay Test-Taking Strategy as well as goal-setting and the likelihood of usage in the future. See Appendix C to view the survey.

Experimental Design

I used a multiple baseline across participants design (Kazdin, 2011). There are a multitude of benefits for using such a design, including minimizing threats to internal validity. Data was collected systematically every three days, on average, to reduce the number of essays in order to control for the threat of maturation. I employed multiple-baseline design components including concurrent data collection across pairs of participants with overlap between participants in each phase to demonstrate a functional relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Multiple-baseline designs are often used for studies such as this in which the skills that are learned (i.e., writing) cannot be withdrawn or reversed.

I used visual analysis (Gast & Ledford, 2014) to inspect trend, level, and variability within and across phases and participants (Kazdin, 2011). Trend represents the slope or direction of the data across the straight line that connects data points. Level denotes the overall mean within a given phase, whereas variability refers to the range of

data, or standard deviation, within a phase (Kratochowill et al., 2013). In addition to these three factors, the following were also considered: immediacy of change, data overlap between phases, and the consistency of data patterns (Kratochowill et al., 2013).

Procedures

Prior to data collection, I randomized the 11 essay prompts across the three phases (i.e., baseline, intervention, and post-intervention). The prompts were administered to participants in the same order to address reliability. With regard to classroom instruction, explicit writing instruction did not take place in students' English class barring occasional vocabulary activities.

Baseline phase. Baseline data was collected systematically every three days (barring extenuating circumstances, e.g., court appearances) with the final baseline essay prompt occurring immediately prior to the intervention phase to allow for adjacent comparison. Baseline data collection occurred concurrently for pairs of participants to demonstrate replication.

Prompt administration for participants occurred in a one-to-one setting. Participants were instructed to read the prompt to themselves. They were then asked to plan and construct an essay response in Microsoft Word to the best of their ability (automated editing tools, such as spell check, had been turned off). They were informed that they had exactly 45 min. to complete the task, in order to simulate GED RLA Extended Response testing conditions. A timer was set so participants were aware of their time use. Once the timer sounded at the end of 45 min., participants were asked to stop writing regardless of whether they completed their essays. I then provided general encouraging feedback (e.g., "Great job today!" and "I can see you put in a lot of effort.")

at the end of each baseline session. Once stable trends were established in baseline (a minimum of three essay prompts were administered to meet standards with reservations; Kratochwill et al., 2013), participants entered the intervention phase one at a time.

Intervention phase. Participants staggered into the intervention phase one-by-one so there was only one participant in this phase at a given time (Horner et al., 2005). Instruction spanned three consecutive one-hr sessions in which participants were taught the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (procedures were adapted from Therrien et al., 2009) and goal-setting techniques (see below) through explicit instruction. For additional details, see Appendix D for procedural checklists. Once participants completed the three instructional sessions, they entered the post-intervention phase.

***Essay Test-Taking Strategy*.** The Essay Test-Taking Strategy is a mnemonic-based approach to help struggling writers break down essay prompts and develop organized responses. The strategy uses the acronym ANSWER:

- **A**nalyze the action words in the prompt (student action: jot down key words)
- **N**otice the requirements of the prompt (student action: rewrite the question in your own words)
- **S**et up an outline (student action: list main ideas of your essay in an outline format)
- **W**ork in detail (student action: add details to your outline)
- **E**ngineer your answer (student action: turn your outline into an essay with an introduction and supporting information)
- **R**eview your work (student action: check that you've answered each part of the question and edit)

In addition, students were instructed to begin writing (step E) when there was 25 min. left on the timer – regardless of whether they completed an outline (step W). This was done in order to help students manage the 45 min. time frame permitted to complete the task.

Goal-setting. Goals established in this study were meant to be challenging yet feasible for students (Schunk, 2003) in order to motivate them to achieve or maintain the American Testing Service's suggested levels for each variable (see Dependent Measures). The goals were set as a range as opposed to a single-value in order to expand students' aims, and were determined based on what the student accomplished during post-intervention sessions.

Session 1. After inquiring about the participant's day to establish rapport and gauge his attitude, I asked the student how he usually responded to essay prompts by giving the student a sample prompt and having him walk me through his strategy aloud. I took notes during the think-aloud for the purposes of feedback. I then provided specific feedback to the student and drew connections between the student's strategy and the Essay Test-Taking Strategy.

Next, I introduced the writing strategy by explaining what each letter of the acronym meant. The student was then asked to commit to using the strategy when responding to essay prompts. Finally, the student wrote the acronym ANSWER vertically on lined paper, skipping lines between letters and leaving additional space between S, W, and E. The student then completed the first two steps of the strategy (i.e., jot down the action words and rewrite the question) with scaffolding to begin responding to the prompt.

Session 2. To begin, the student and I reviewed the Essay Test-Taking Strategy aloud. The student was then presented with the prompt and his work from the prior session to review. Next, the student completed the following two steps of the strategy (set up an outline and work in detail). I provided suggestions for effective outlining, scaffolding, and feedback as the student added detail to his outline. At the end of the session, we reviewed the entire strategy and the student predicted what he would be doing the next day (i.e., the final two steps of the strategy).

Session 3. I reviewed the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with the student verbally, asking him to recall what each letter stood for. The student was then presented with the prompt and his work from the previous two days to review. Next, the student was asked to complete the final two steps of the strategy (engineer your answer and revise). I provided feedback and scaffolding to the student while he worked. Upon completing the strategy steps, the student and I reviewed the strategy and the student was asked to recite and explain each step aloud.

Finally, I introduced the goal-setting component of the intervention through which participants learned how to graph and set goals for three variables: (a) total number of words written (including misspelled words); (b) number of transition words and phrases; and (c) number of complete paragraphs. The participant was instructed on how to count these variables as follows:

1. Total written words was found by clicking “Review” and then “Word Count” in Microsoft Word.
2. Transition words (and phrases, which will count as 1 regardless of the number of words used in the phrase) were counted by reading over the essay and

determining as a team (the student and I) whether a transition was used and if it was logical.

3. The number of complete paragraphs was identified by the inclusion of 3 to 7 complete sentences (run-ons counted as only 1 sentence) and a blank line separating it from other lines with text.

The student and I graphed each variable using bar graphs in Microsoft Excel. Once graphing was complete, each student created a realistic goal-range for each variable that he aimed to achieve during the following session (see Appendix E).

Post-intervention phase. As with baseline, essay prompts were systematically administered every three days (on average) to participants in the post-intervention phase (participants completed five essays each; Kratochwill et al., 2013). Students had 45 min. to plan and type their essays in a word processor. After the timer sounded or once the participant completed his essay response (whichever was first), he and I evaluated the essay for the three variables related to goal-setting (i.e., total words written, number of transition words, and number of complete sentences). The participant and I then graphed his progress and established a goal related to each of the domains. During the following session, students reviewed their goals from the previous session. They were then given 45 min. to plan and type their essays, followed again by essay evaluation and goal-setting. In sum, each post-intervention session followed this format:

Step 1: Student reviewed goals from previous session (note: goals for the first post-intervention session were reviewed but used strictly as an example of goal-setting as students completed their intervention essays with instructor scaffolding) (2 min.)

Step 2: Student read the prompt, then planned and typed an essay response using the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (45 min.)

Step 3: Student reviewed his essay and graphed the three variables for goal-setting (5 min.)

Step 4: Student established a goal for each goal-setting variable (i.e., total words written, transition words/phrases, and complete paragraphs) with instructor support (5 min.). Participants were permitted to have a snack and listen to music during this time.

Procedural Fidelity

I developed procedural checklists for each of the three phases (i.e., baseline, intervention, and post-intervention), including three separate checklists for each of the three intervention sessions (see Appendix D). Across the four participants, there were a total of 46 sessions of which 18 (39%) were audio recorded and assessed, with a minimum of 30% of sessions recorded per phase per participant (Kratochwill et al., 2010). Video recording was not utilized in order to preserve anonymity of the participants.

Two master's-level students independently assessed procedural fidelity through the audio recordings and checklists. I calculated procedural fidelity by dividing the number of steps implemented by the total number of steps listed in a given checklist and multiplied it by 100. Procedural fidelity was determined to be 100% across all sessions and phases. Interobserver agreement was also 100%.

Interscorer Reliability

The two master's students were also trained to assess student essays using the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric and the GED Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric. Training took place over two days prior to data collection using GED-released rubric training materials, sample prompts, and sample essays. During training, raters' interscorer reliability was 94% and 92% on the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric and the GED Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric (respectively) across four sample essays using point-by-point agreement (i.e., agreements divided by agreements plus disagreements multiplied by 100; Kazdin, 2011). Interscorer reliability during data collection was 98% and 97% for the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric and the GED Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric (respectively) across the 34 student essays, again using point-by-point agreement.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to understand if the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with goal-setting affected youth offenders' essay writing skills and achievement on the GED RLA Extended Response subtest. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate overall scores on the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric and the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric across pairs of participants, whereas Figures 3 through 6 depict students' scores on the three traits that composed the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric. All four participants demonstrated mastery of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy and increased or stabilized their scores on the GED RLA Extended Response subtest, though this measure had greater variability. Additionally, students made improvements in the areas of words and paragraphs written and transitions used throughout their post-intervention essays. Table 2 depicts these gains. Finally, social validity measures (i.e., a student questionnaire and

contextual data) illustrate students' attitudes towards the intervention and offer circumstantial information that may have played a role in student achievement during the study.

Rubric Scores

During baseline, the four participants demonstrated low scores (range: 0.2-2.5) on the Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric, in which students could earn a total of 6 points, an indication that they were not utilizing the strategy or the majority of the strategy components. However, all four students achieved mastery or near-mastery of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy after intervention (range: 4.6-6). Raphael, Mikey, and Donny demonstrated low essay prompt scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric, which could also be scored as high as 6 points, during baseline (range: 0-3) but improved after intervention (range: 2-5). Leo was the only student who scored higher on the baseline prompts (range: 4-5) and maintained those scores in the post-intervention phase.

Essay Test-Taking Strategy Rubric. Each of the participants demonstrated a significant level change between the baseline and post-intervention phases with regard to use of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy, resulting in no overlapping data. Raphael's scores ranged from 0.5 to 1.7 (M=1.50, SD=0.87) in baseline with some variability due to an outlier data point (see Contextual Data for anecdotal information on this and other participant sessions), but increased to 4.6 to 6 (M=5.54, SD=0.65) after intervention with slightly less variance. His final three data points illustrated a flat trend. Mikey's range for the Essay Test-Taking Strategy rubric in baseline was 0.2 to 1.5 (M=0.88, SD=0.54) with a decreasing trend whereas his post-intervention range was 4.6 to 6 (M=5.54, SD=0.6) with an increasing trend barring one data point. Donny's baseline range was 0.2

to 1.1 (*M*=0.63, *SD*=0.45) and was an increasing trend. However, a profound level change occurred after intervention that likely cannot be explained by the increasing baseline trend. Donny's range on the rubric during post-intervention was 5.5 to 6 (*M*=5.90, *SD*=0.22), establishing a zero trend with one minor negative deviation. Finally, Leo's score range was 1.5 to 2.5 (*M*=1.75, *SD*=0.50) in baseline with minimal variance and a flat trend across three of the four data points. He consistently achieved a score of 6 on each of the five post-intervention prompts with no variance.

Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric. Raphael began baseline low compared to his other scores causing some variance in his baseline data. However, his final two points in baseline were consistent (score: 3) which resulted in a score range of 0 to 3 (*M*=2.00, *SD*=1.73). Raphael's initial prompt after intervention was also low, resulting in a lack of immediate level change. Successive data collection resulted in an upward trend before his scores leveled with the final two prompts (range: 2-5; *M*=3.6, *SD*=1.14).

Mikey's baseline scores were variable, ranging from 1 to 3 (*M*=1.75, *SD*=0.96). He demonstrated a 1-point level change between his last baseline data point and first post-intervention data point. Mikey's second post-intervention prompt decreased slightly but he achieved a flat trend across the remaining prompts (range: 2-3; *M*=2.80, *SD*=0.45).

Donny's baseline scores ranged from 2 to 3 (*M*=2.33, *SD*=0.58), increasing 1 point on the final baseline prompt resulting in minor variance. He demonstrated a 1-point level change after intervention, achieving a score of 4. His scores continued with an increasing trend before decreasing two points; however, Donny returned to a flat trend with the final two data points (range: 3-5; *M*=4.40, *SD*=0.89).

Leo was consistently the highest scoring of the participants. His score range in baseline was 4 to 5 (*M*=4.25, *SD*=0.50) with little variability. Leo remained within this range after intervention, thus not demonstrating a level change between phases. However, his mean score increased slightly from baseline to the post-intervention phase (*M*=4.60, *SD*=0.55) indicating a minor increase in level.

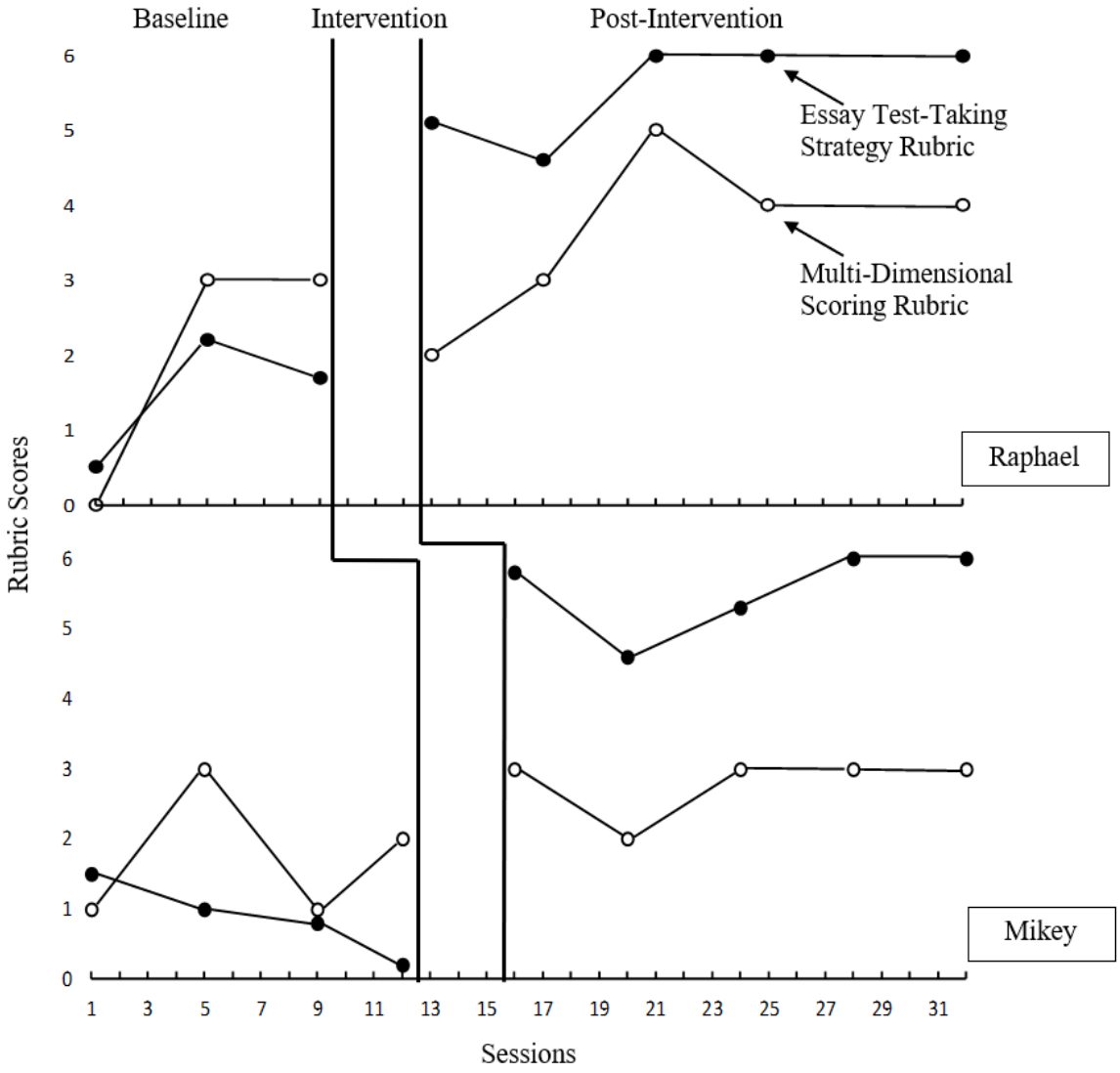

Figure 1. Rubric scores for Raphael and Mikey.

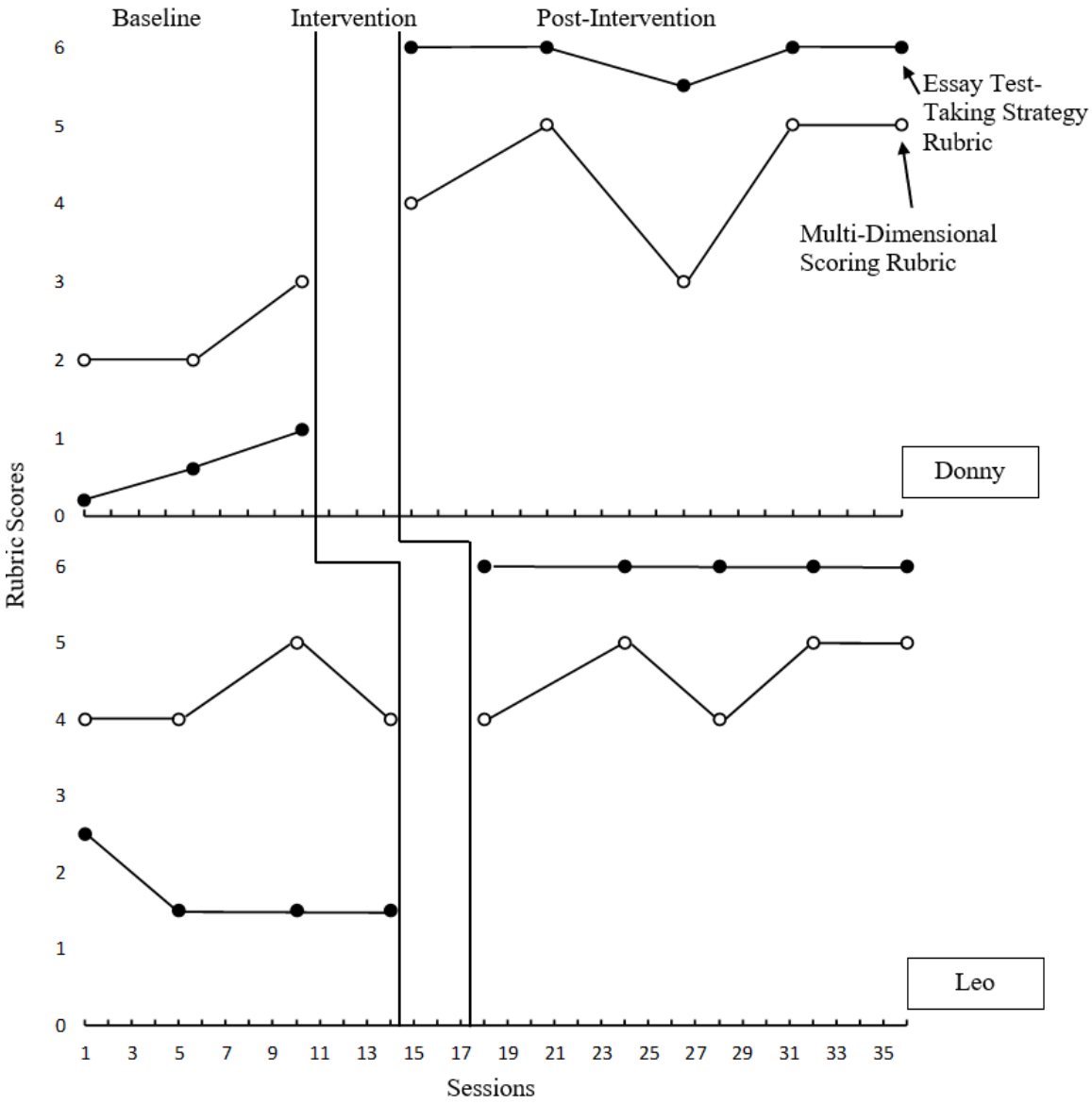

Figure 2. Rubric scores for Donny and Leo.

Individual trait scores. In order to further examine experimental control, I analyzed the functional relationship between the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with goal-setting on the individual trait scores (i.e., Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence, Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure, and Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions) that composed the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric. Each trait could be scored 0, 1, or 2. Overall, Traits 1 and 2 were affected by the intervention across the four participants. Trait 3 remained largely

unaltered between the baseline and post-intervention phases. See Figures 3 through 6 for a visual depiction.

During baseline, Raphael's scores for Traits 1, 2, and 3 all ranged from 0 to 1 (*M*=0.67, *SD*=0.58) with variability due to the first data point. After intervention, his Trait 1 scores ranged from 0 to 2 (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0.71) and had an increasing trend before decreasing slightly to become level. Trait 2 ranged from 1 to 2 (*M*=1.60, *SD*=0.55) and was less variable than Trait 1, achieving a 1-point level change between phases and establishing a flat trend mid-way through the post-intervention phase. Finally, Trait 3 was a zero trend across phases as it was consistently a score of 1 (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0).

Mikey's scores for Trait 1 in baseline ranged from 0 to 1 (*M*=0.25, *SD*=0.50) with little variance. There was a 1-point level change between the final baseline data point and the first data point after intervention. Although Mikey's post-intervention scores were higher on average, he remained in the 0 to 1 range (*M*=0.80, *SD*=0.45). Trait 2 also ranged from 0 to 1 (*M*=0.75, *SD*=0.50) during baseline and post-intervention. There was little variability between phases and a flat trend emerged after intervention instruction (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0). Last, Trait 3 ranged from 0 to 1 (*M*=0.50, *SD*=0.58) as well, with variance and no stable trend in baseline followed by a flat trend in post-intervention (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0). There was no level change evident between phases.

Donny's baseline scores for Trait 1 ranged from 0 to 1 (*M*=0.33, *SD*=0.58) with slight variance due to the final data point, which increased. Traits 2 and 3 were each consistently a score of 1 (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0) during baseline, demonstrating a flat trend. After intervention, Donny's Trait 1 ranged from 1 to 2 (*M*=1.60, *SD*=0.55) with minor variance and a gradual increased change in level. His Trait 2 score also ranged from 1 to

2 (*M*=1.80, *SD*=0.45) with an immediate level change between phases. A flat trend was prohibited by one decreasing data point. Contrarily, Trait 3 remained a score of 1 for each phase (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0) across prompts.

Within the baseline phase, Leo's Trait 1 scores ranged from 1 to 2 (*M*=1.75, *SD*=0.50) with minor variance due to the first data point which is lower than the remaining three. His first post-intervention data point dropped and his scores across the phase ranged from 1 to 2 (*M*=1.60, *SD*=0.55), decreasing slightly overall with some variance within the phase. However, Leo's Trait 2 score did increase. During baseline, his Trait 2 score ranged from 1 to 2 (*M*=1.50, *SD*=0.58) with variance and no stable trend. There was an immediate level change upon entering post-intervention during which his Trait 2 score was consistently a score of 2 (*M*=2.00, *SD*=0). Finally, Leo's Trait 3 score was unaffected between the phase changes, demonstrating a flat trend due to a consistent score of 1 (*M*=1.00, *SD*=0).

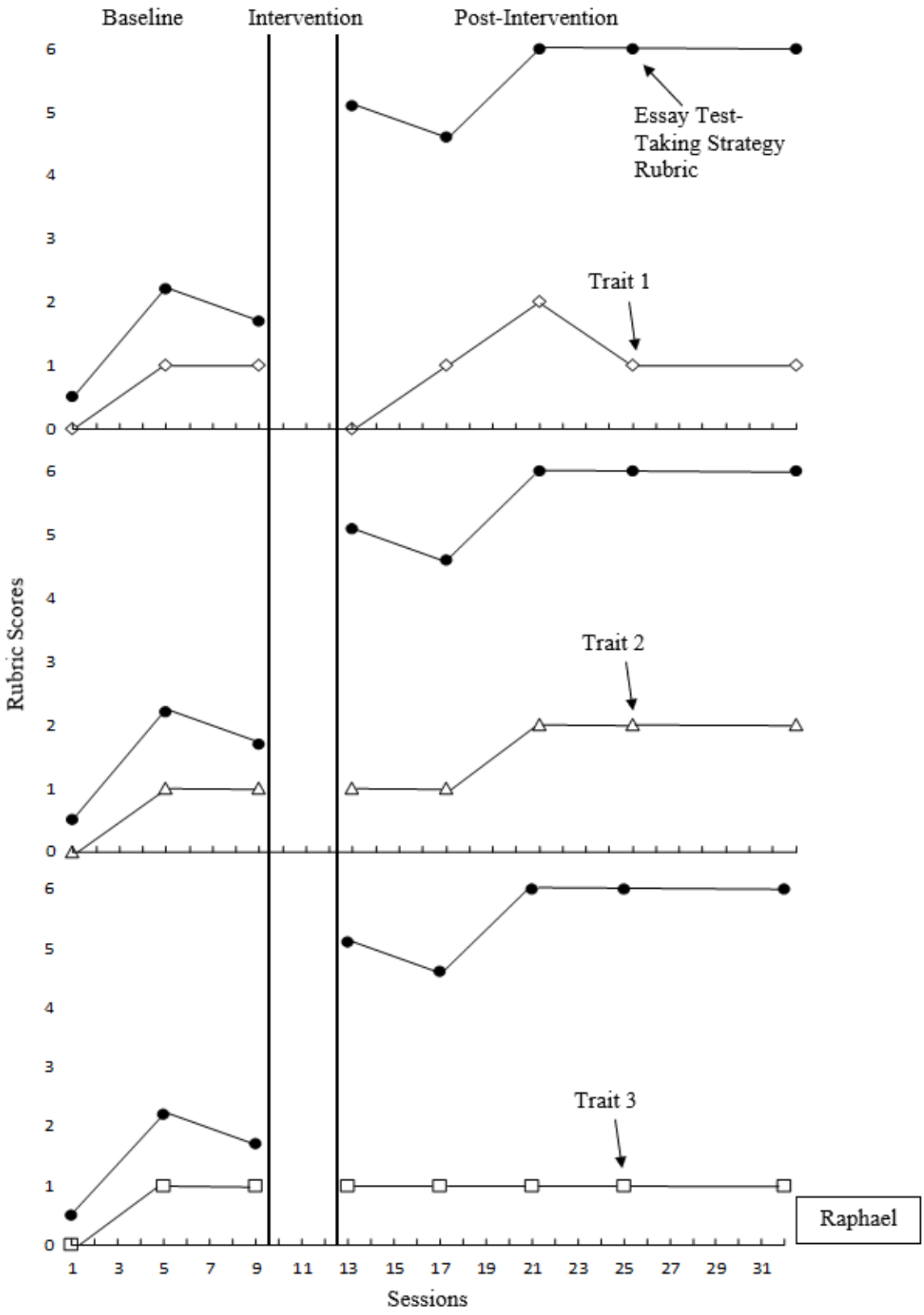

Figure 3. Raphael's trait scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric.

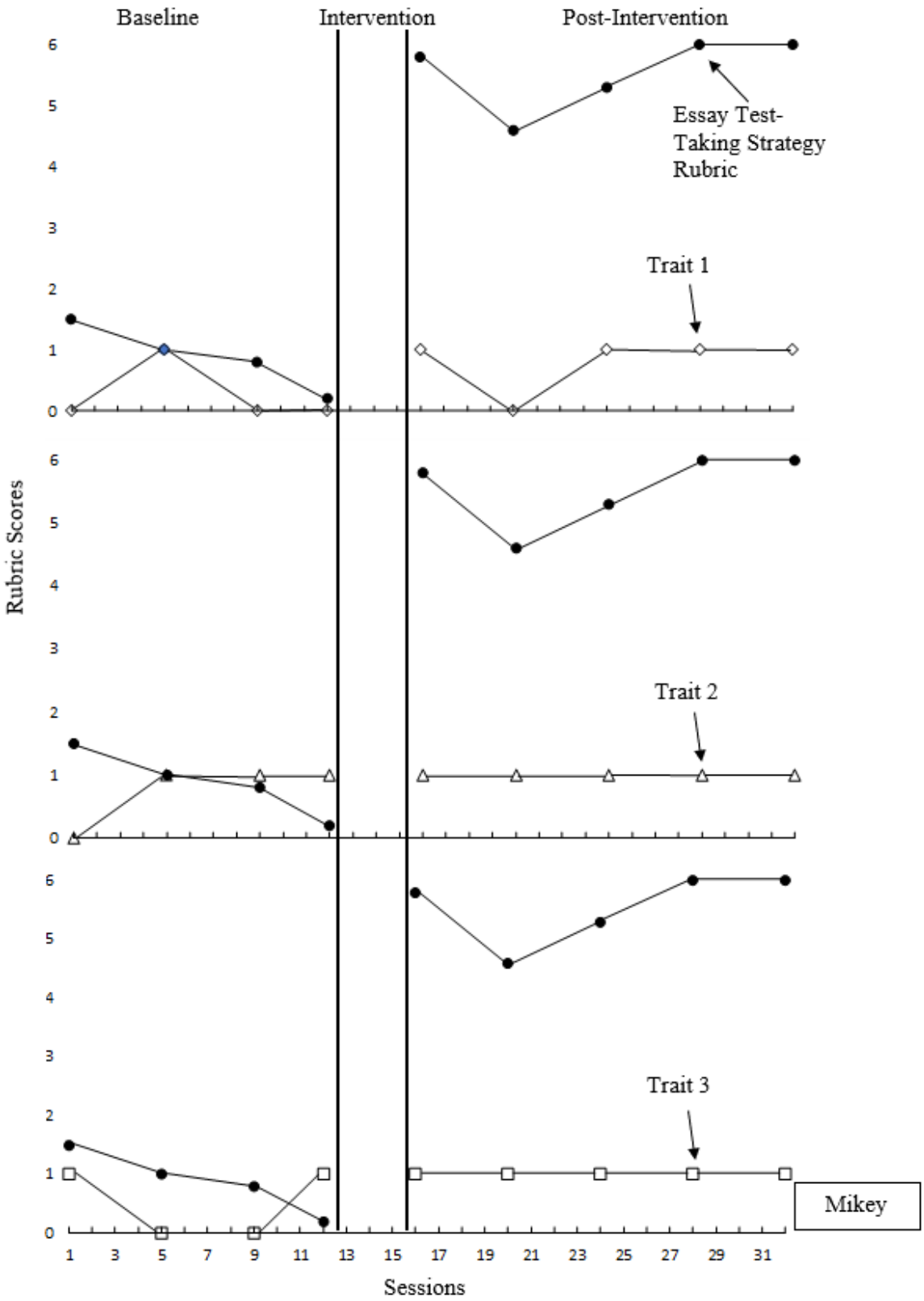

Figure 4. Mikey's trait scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric.

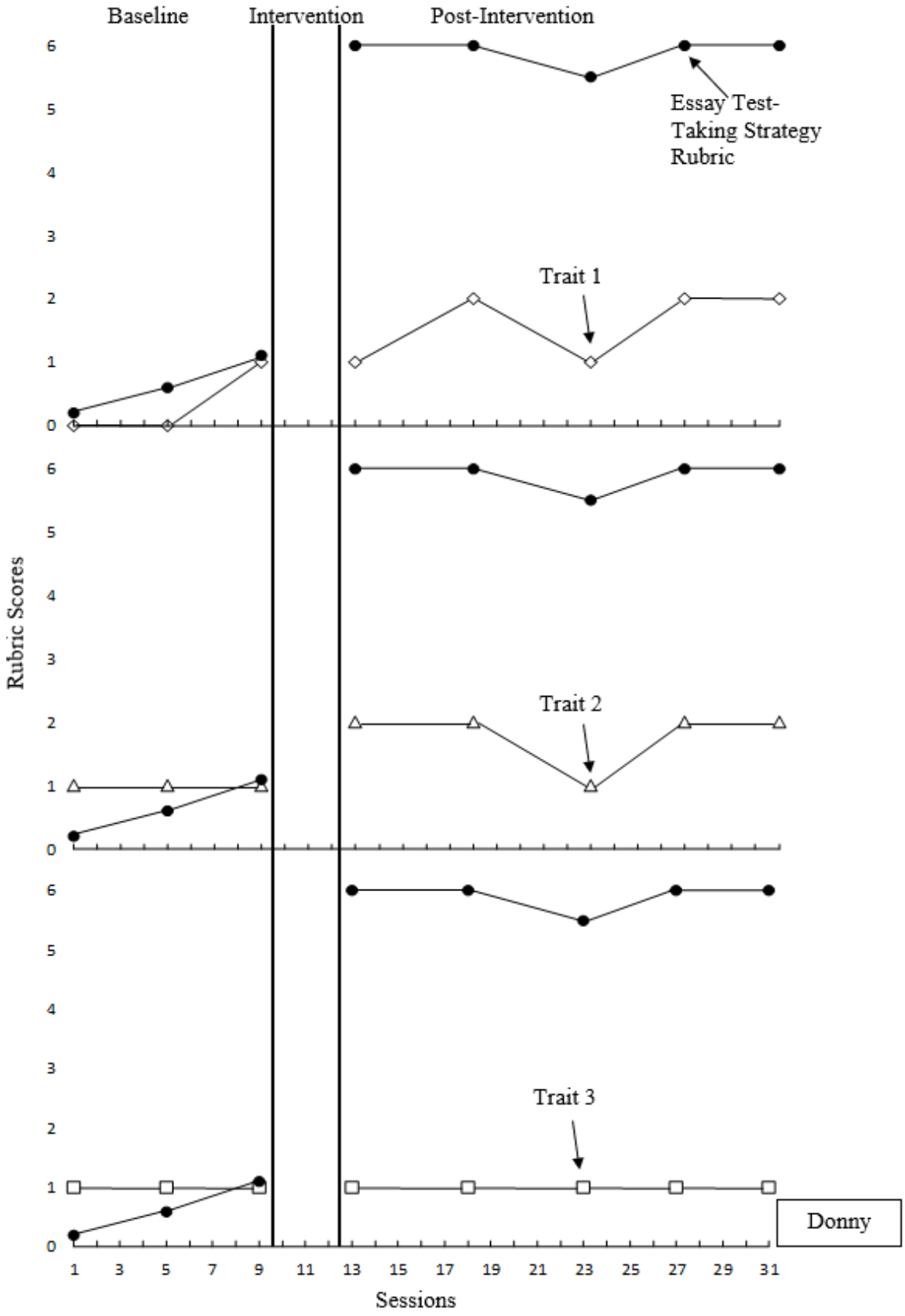

Figure 5. Donny's individual trait scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric.

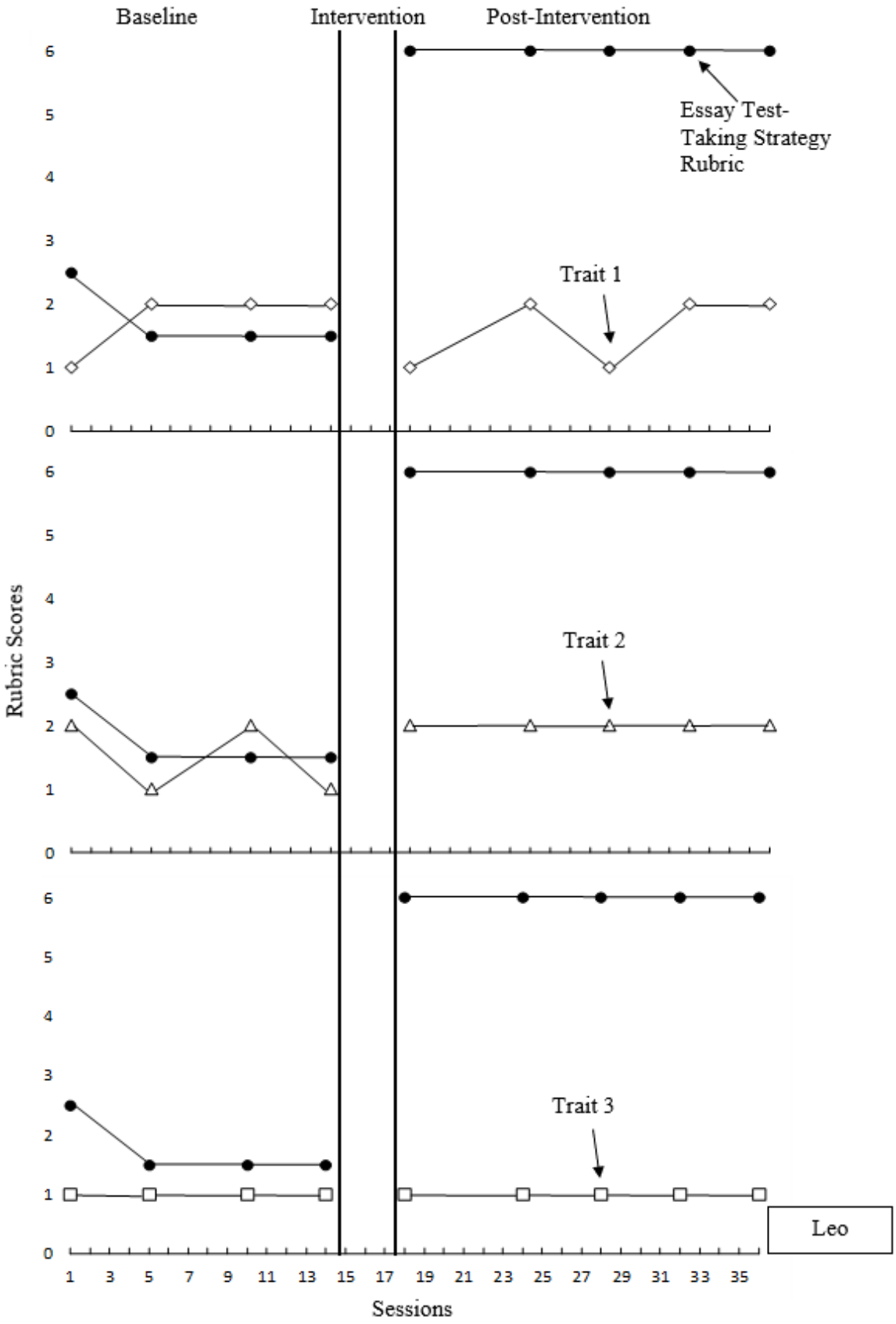

Figure 6. Leo's individual trait scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric.

Variables Measured in Goal-Setting

Data for the variables measured in goal-setting (i.e., number of words written, number of transition words and phrases used, and number of paragraphs written) was collected for every essay across the baseline and post-intervention phases. Table 2 displays students' within-phase means and standard deviations for each variable. After receiving instruction on the intervention, all four students made improvements in each domain with the exception of Leo in the category of number of words written for which his average number of words written fell by 37 words. However, Raphael, Mikey, and Donny averaged a collective increase of 92.8 words. With regard to the number of transitions used, the overall mean increase between the baseline and post-intervention phases was 4.99 transitions per essay. Finally, the average post-intervention increase for total paragraphs written across the participants was 2.02 paragraphs per essay.

Table 2

Data for Variables Measured in Goal-Setting Across Phases

Student	# Words per Essay				# Transitions per Essay				# Paragraphs per Essay			
	Baseline		Post-Intervention		Baseline		Post-Intervention		Baseline		Post-Intervention	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Raphael	117.33	73.92	251	130.28	1.33	1.53	6.2	3.96	.67	.58	3	1.41
Mikey	128.25	13.07	195.06	52.06	.25	.5	6	2.92	1.5	1	3.8	1.1
Donny	156	35.93	234	53.16	.33	.48	4.6	1.14	2	1	4.2	.84
Leo	443.25	119.76	406.2	88.26	2.75	.96	7.8	1.92	3.75	.5	5	0

Social Validity

In order to gauge the usefulness of the intervention with students, a brief questionnaire was administered on the final day of probing. All four students completed the survey. Additionally, anecdotal information was collected throughout the study with regard to context surrounding each session (e.g., schedule changes and events that could influence participants' work). This data offered an additional layer to the prompt analysis – particularly for outlier rubric scores.

Questionnaire. Student responses ranged from Strongly Agree to Neutral across the seven questions. Three participants strongly agreed that the writing strategy helped with essay organization and intended to use it on the GED. Further, all participants liked seeing their progress through goal-setting. Survey responses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Social Validity Questionnaire Results

Question	Student Responses				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
Use of the ANSWER Strategy					
1. The ANSWER strategy was easy to learn and use.	1	2	1	0	0
2. The ANSWER strategy helped me understand the essay prompts.	1	1	2	0	0
3. The ANSWER strategy helped me organize my essays.	3	0	1	0	0
4. I plan to use the ANSWER strategy when I have to write an essay, like on the GED.	3	1	0	0	0
Use of Goal-Setting					
5. Goal-setting was easy to learn and use.	0	4	0	0	0
6. Using goal-setting helped me feel more confident in my writing abilities.	2	2	0	0	0
7. I liked being able to see my progress through graphing.	4	0	0	0	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Contextual data. Throughout this study I maintained a log of contextual information, such as events and conversations, that could have affected students' performance positively or negatively. Although causal relationships cannot be deduced from this anecdotal information, it contributes to the understanding of the conditions under which this research took place.

The day prior to Raphael's first baseline session, he learned that his best friend had been killed back home in his community. This could have negatively affected Raphael's performance, as indicated by the fact that it is by far the lowest scoring data point across phases. Another event that may have influenced Raphael's performance occurred on his first day in the post-intervention phase. Due to a schedule change in the detention facility, Raphael and I moved our session time from 1pm to 8am. When I picked Raphael up for our session he noted, "I'm not going to be focused. I just want to tell you that. I just took my [ADHD] medicine, so I'm not going to be focused."

One event that may have positively influenced Raphael's performance on his third post-intervention essay, which is his highest scoring data point, was the fact that he successfully passed the GED the day prior to this session. Passing the GED may have boosted his confidence, thus improving his self-efficacy with prompt writing and his use of the writing strategy, which he reportedly utilized on the GED test itself. Raphael's passing of the GED may also be considered an indicator of social validity for the intervention.

One final notable outlier is Donny's third post-intervention data point. Although his score on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric is no lower than his highest baseline score during this session, it is two points below the surrounding post-intervention data

points. Donny wrote over 100 words less on this essay than on both his previous and subsequent essays. When I inquired about why he seemed to be less engaged during this session, Donny confided that he was upset about missing Thanksgiving at his grandmother's house (Thanksgiving was in two days). In fact, he was so upset that he declined to participate in the facility's Thanksgiving lunch the day prior. He continued on to say that his grandmother was unable to visit him at the facility and he would have to wait until his release to see her again.

Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to determine if there was a functional relation between a writing intervention that could be taught under relatively brief time constraints and adjudicated students' essay writing skills on the RLA GED Extended Response subtest. Systematically delivering the intervention at different points in time increased confidence in the functional relation between the intervention and dependent variables as behavior change only began to occur once the intervention was introduced (Gast & Ledford, 2014). Further, results for acquisition of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy were replicated across participants, though there was a gap in time between the first and second pairs. Advancement on the GED writing subtest was also replicated four times, with varying levels of improvement.

Skill Acquisition and Self-Efficacy

The ability to utilize the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with fidelity was demonstrated by all four participants as evidenced by their high scores on the strategy's corresponding rubric. The skills required by the strategy (e.g., analyzing the task, organizing an outline) were not only components of the strategy itself, but are important

aspects of comprising satisfactory written compositions – something that is vital for education, employment, and general communication abilities (Green et al., 2018). By gaining these skills and charting progress on essay length, number of sentences, and transitions used via goal-setting, students may have also begun to build self-efficacy in the domain of written language (Schunk, 2003). Although self-efficacy was not measured with a validated instrument in this research, increases in the domain may explain why the social validity rating for goal-setting was so high among the four participants.

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "a judgement of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (p. 21). Individuals with low levels of self-efficacy are prone to avoidance and self-limiting behaviors that "create obstacles that block opportunity for new experiences" (Hergenrather, Turner, Rhodes, & Barlow, 2008, p. 34). For instance, on the first day of baseline Raphael commented, "I can't do this. I can't write. I know I'm no good at writing." On the other hand, those with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to embrace activities that foster growth of their burgeoning competencies (Hergenrather et al., 2008).

Self-efficacy is key for juvenile offenders not only for writing tasks but in their pursuit of post-secondary education and employment opportunities after their release (Mathur & Griller Clark, 2013). Further, not only does employment and continued engagement in education improve one's sense of self, but former offenders who are positively engaged in work and/or post-secondary education are significantly less likely to return to the justice system (Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, & Havel, 2002; Hagner et al.,

2008). This is all the more important for young adults leaving the system who, should they recidivate, would find themselves in the adult prison system.

Strategy Rubric Generalization to the GED

One way to open the door to future employment and post-secondary opportunities for juvenile offenders at high-risk of becoming high school dropouts is through obtainment of a GED during their detainment or adjudication (Black et al., 1996; Cavendish, 2014; Hagner et al., 2008; Nutall et al., 2003). Students' use of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy in this study demonstrated that the intervention was beneficial in improving most participants' scores on the GED RLA Extended Response subtest. However, it was more effective for the lower-level writers (i.e., Raphael, Mikey, and Donny) whereas it tended to reduce essay lengths for Leo, a comparatively stronger writer.

One possible explanation for this is that the intervention slowed Leo's writing process. Because Leo was already attaining adequate scores (i.e., 4 and 5) on the GED RLA subtest in baseline, it was apparent that he had a consistent and effective writing process (though not clearly demonstrated on previous assessments; see Instructional Approach for a discussion). Thus, the cognitive load (Sweller, 1994) associated with having to rethink his method to writing when utilizing the Essay Test-Taking Strategy could have affected him negatively regarding the amount he was able to write.

Trait scores. Although use of the Essay Test-Taking Strategy with goal-setting helped to increase students' GED essay scores, upon closer inspection it was clear that only two of the three Multi-Dimensional Scoring traits tended to be affected. However, this is an indication of experimental control. Because the Essay Test-Taking Strategy is

specifically aimed at helping writers organize their essays and appropriately answer a given prompt (i.e., Traits 1 and 2), but is not designed to improve writers' grammar and mechanics (Trait 3) beyond general revision of their work, it is expected that Trait 3 would not have been affected. If it were affected, internal validity would be questionable.

Instructional Approach

Jacobi (2008) noted that in order for literacy programs in juvenile justice facilities to be successful, they first must be centered on establishing mutual respect between teachers and students and take into consideration multiple motivational strategies. In this vein, important factors for fostering learning in juvenile offenders - who often have disabilities and histories of trauma - include: feeling emotionally and physically safe, perceiving support from and feeling connected to a caring instructor, and being actively engaged in activities that are viewed as relevant to their futures (Osher et al., 2016). By establishing relationships with the participants prior to beginning the study, and in maintaining that rapport throughout the study, Raphael, Mikey, Donny, and Leo may have been more driven to put forth effort in their writing.

In their study on school connectedness for youths in the juvenile justice system, Reed and Wexler (2014) found that adjudicated students felt better supported by teachers who offered instructional assistance and specific feedback on tasks than those who did not – two components that are built into Essay Test-Taking Strategy instruction. Further, over 50% of survey respondents (N=48) reported that they preferred one-to-one instructional opportunities and roughly one third admitted that they would not request a teacher's assistance unless the instructor checked on them personally. By holding study

sessions in a one-to-one setting throughout this research, students may have felt more comfortable asking questions during strategy instruction.

Additionally, a larger percent of Reed and Wexler's (2014) sample (67%) reported that an adult in the secure facility checked in on them frequently and cared about their progress as compared to adults in their base schools (48%). Although a causal connection cannot be proven based on the results of the current study, students' engagement with essay-writing may have been influenced by our relationships. Notably, Leo's previous academic record indicated that he was a struggling writer. With the exception of his GED practice test, which he took at PJDC and missed passing by one point, all of his other writing and reading assessments had been conducted at his base school. Baseline results from this study demonstrated that he was a stronger writer than thought to have been based on these previous data sources. One possible explanation for Leo's high scores across all phases of the study is that he may have put in additional effort on the prompts due to the level of attention he received in the one-to-one setting.

Limitations

Due to the misalignment of student commitment at PJDC, data collection occurred concurrently across pairs of participants as opposed to concurrently across all four participants. Thus, although all four participants demonstrated a functional relation between the independent and dependent variables, our confidence in these results is limited to the replications between pairs of participants of which there are only two. This prohibits the minimum three concurrent replications necessary to meet single case design intervention research standards (Kratochwill et al., 2013). In this vein, between three and four data collection points occurred in baseline for each student rather than the

recommended five data points to meet standards without reservations (Kratochowill et al., 2013). Further, student commitment timelines presented an issue for administering maintenance probes to gauge if the skills gained during intervention were maintained.

With regard to essay scoring, scorers were trained using teacher scoring materials released by the GED Testing Service. Thus, it is important to note that they were not trained directly by GED Testing Service personnel. Because of this, there is the possibility that essay scores for this research may deviate from scores that would be administered by official GED scorers and the automated scoring engine.

Additionally, the one-to-one instructional format utilized in this study may be harder to reproduce in some juvenile justice facilities. Although pull-out instructors such as reading specialists and special educators can implement this format, it does depend on the availability of the instructor and space within any given setting. Furthermore, this instructional format paired with the interventionist's rapport with the participants may have implications for the efficacy of the intervention under circumstances in which the students do not have a strong relationship with the teacher.

Conclusions & Implications

Taking the limitations of this research into account, it can be said that the participants in this research were able to learn the Essay Test-Taking Strategy within a brief instructional period – a key consideration when working with students in detention facilities. Additionally, the writing strategy proved marginally effective in improving students' scores on the GED RLA Extended Response subtest. Although earning a GED should only be considered for individuals at serious risk for school drop-out (ESSA, 2015), it is a viable alternative to a traditional education route. Interventions like the

Essay Test-Taking Strategy with goal-setting can be utilized to guide students with and without disabilities to improve the skills necessary for passing the GED as well as to foster a sense of self-efficacy.

Future Implications for Practitioners and Researchers

When instructing youth offenders who are preparing to take the GED, it is important to provide them with ample practice on GED-style writing prompts as it is likely they will not be familiar with this form of expository writing – especially if they did not attend school frequently prior to their arrest. If utilizing the Essay Test-Taking Strategy, be sure to also allocate instructional time to help students build their skills in the domain of grammar and mechanics (i.e., Trait 3 of the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric). Further, students should be exposed to timed writing conditions in order to build their confidence in performing under such circumstances. It is also important to ensure adjudicated students feel a connection to their instructors and are provided opportunities for feedback and explicit instruction in order to maximize every individual's chance to succeed.

Additionally, Mathur and Schoenfeld (2010) warned that obtaining a GED alone would not benefit individuals' long-term successes. To this end, the CSG Justice Center (2017, September) acknowledged that earning a GED without additional vocational training carries few added benefits than dropping out of school. Thus, practitioners should pair opportunities for vocational certification with GED preparation in detention or correctional settings when possible. If students are unable to engage in vocational education during their time in secure custody, access to vocation in community settings after youths are released from the justice system should be arranged (Hagner et al., 2008).

Future researchers should investigate other approaches to teaching writing in the juvenile justice system. For instance, the efficacy of peer-mediated approaches to writing could be explored with the Essay Test-Taking Strategy (see Wexler, Reed, Barton, Mitchell, & Clancy (2018) for an example of a peer-mediated approach to reading for youth offenders). Students who successfully pass the GED while using the Essay Test-Taking Strategy could be paired with those studying for the exam. Such a format may build students' confidence in their writing (Jacobi, 2008) while helping hone appropriate inter-personal skills that many adjudicated youths struggle with (Pyle et al., 2016). Finally, researchers should consider additional ways in which to tailor the Essay Test-Taking Strategy to better align with the GED RLA Extended Response subtest. For instance, time-sensitive interventions (e.g., a mnemonic) aimed at grammar and mechanics may be paired with the Essay Test-Taking Strategy to attend to all three trait scores on the Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric.

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Appendix A

ANSWER Strategy-Specific Rubric

Step 1: Analyze the Action Words (1 each)

- Were the key action word(s) underlined once? _____ / 1

Step 2: Notice the Requirements (1 each)

- Were the requirements underlined twice? _____ / 1

Step 3: Set Up an Outline (.5 each)

- Was an outline constructed?
- Did the main points/ideas in the outline match the requirements in the question? _____/1

Step 4: Work in Details (1 each)

- Were relevant details listed under the main points in the outline? _____ / 1

Step 5: Engineer Your Answer (.2 each)

- Was there an Introductory Paragraph?
- Did the Introductory Paragraph contain a rephrase of the question?
- Was there a Detail Paragraph for each requirement in the question?
- Did each Detail Paragraph begin with a Topic Sentence related to a requirement?
- Were detail sentences in included in each paragraph? _____ / 1

Step 6: Review Your Answer (.5 each)

- Were all outlined items included?
- Was the question adequately answered? _____ / 1

TOTAL SCORE: $\frac{\text{Points Earned}}{\text{Total Points}} = \frac{\_\_\_\_\_}{6} =$ %

Appendix B

Multi-Dimensional Scoring Rubric for RLA

Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence

Score	Description
Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence	
2	• generates text-based argument(s) and establishes a purpose that is connected to the prompt • cites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) • analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts (e.g., distinguishes between supported and unsupported claims, makes reasonable inferences about underlying premises or assumptions, identifies fallacious reasoning, evaluates the credibility of sources, etc.)
1	• generates an argument and demonstrates some connection to the prompt • cites some evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include a mix of relevant and irrelevant citations or a mix of textual and non-textual references) • partially analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may be simplistic, limited, or inaccurate
0	• may attempt to create an argument OR lacks purpose or connection to the prompt OR does neither • cites minimal or no evidence from source text(s) (sections of text may be copied from source) • minimally analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may completely lack analysis or demonstrate minimal or no understanding of the given argument(s)

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt

Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic

Response is incomprehensible

Response is not in English

Response has not been attempted (blank)

Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure

Score	Description
Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure	
2	• contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; most ideas are elaborated upon • contains a sensible progression of ideas with clear connections between details and main points • establishes an organizational structure that conveys the message and purpose of the response; applies transitional devices appropriately • establishes and maintains a formal style and appropriate tone that demonstrate awareness of the audience and purpose of the task • chooses specific words to express ideas clearly
1	• contains ideas that are inconsistently developed and/or may reflect simplistic or vague reasoning; some ideas are elaborated upon • demonstrates some evidence of a progression of ideas, but details may be disjointed or lacking connection to main ideas • establishes an organization structure that may inconsistently group ideas or is partially effective at conveying the message of the task; uses transitional devices inconsistently • may inconsistently maintain a formal style and appropriate tone to demonstrate an awareness of the audience and purpose of the task • may occasionally misuse words and/or choose words that express ideas in vague terms
0	• contains ideas that are insufficiently or illogically developed, with minimal or no elaboration on main ideas • contains an unclear or no progression of ideas; details may be absent or irrelevant to the main ideas • establishes an ineffective or no discernable organizational structure; does not apply transitional devices, or does so inappropriately • uses an informal style and/or inappropriate tone that demonstrates limited or no awareness of audience and purpose • may frequently misuse words, overuse slang or express ideas in a vague or repetitious manner

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

Score	Description
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions	
2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: 1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs 2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism 3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures 4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity 5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments • demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: 1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions 2) subject-verb agreement 3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case 4) placement of modifiers and correct word order 5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences) 6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns 7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation) • may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing.
1	• demonstrates inconsistent sentence structure; may contain some repetitive, choppy, rambling, or awkward sentences that may detract from clarity; demonstrates inconsistent control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • demonstrates inconsistent control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • may contain frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that occasionally interfere with comprehension; standard usage is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand draft writing.
0	• demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing. OR • response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

*Because test-takers will be given only 45 minutes to complete Extended Response tasks, there is no expectation that a response should be completely free of conventions or usage errors to receive a score of 3.

Appendix C

Social Validity Questionnaire

Please read each question and circle the response that best reflects your opinion.

A. Use of the ANSWER Strategy

1. The ANSWER strategy was easy to learn and use.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

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2. The ANSWER strategy helped me understand the essay prompts.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

---

3. The ANSWER strategy helped me organize my essays.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

---

4. I plan to use the ANSWER strategy when I have to write an essay, like on the GED.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

B. Use of Goal-Setting

1. Goal-setting was easy to learn and use.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

---

2. Using goal-setting helped me feel more confident in my writing abilities.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

---

3. I liked being able to see my progress through graphing.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Appendix D

Procedural Fidelity Checklists

Baseline Procedural Checklist

Task	**Observed** (check only if task occurred)
Instructor tells student to read prompt, plan, and compose essay and informs student that s/he will have 45 minutes to complete the activity	
Instructor sets timer for 45 minutes	
Student attempts or composes essay with a computer word processor	
Instructor asks student to stop when timer goes off (or student concludes activity prior to this)	
Instructor provides non-specific positive feedback to student	

Intervention (Session 1) Procedural Checklist

Task	**Observed** (check only if task occurred)
Instructor gives student writing prompt	
Student explains aloud his/her process for responding to prompt	
Instructor gives feedback	
Writing strategy is introduced	
Student commits to using strategy	
Student completes first step of strategy (copies down action words)	
Student completes second step (rewrites question)	

Intervention (Session 2) Procedural Checklist

Task	**Observed** (Check only if task occurred)
Instructor and student review writing strategy aloud	
Student reviews prompt from prior session and work completed on first two steps	
Student completes third step (sets up an outline)	
Student completes fourth step (adds detail to outline)	
Instructor offers feedback	
Instructor and student review writing strategy	
Student predicts what s/he will do tomorrow	

Intervention (Session 3) Procedural Checklist

Task	**Observed** (Check only if task occurred)
Instructor and student review writing strategy aloud	
Student reviews prompt from prior sessions and work completed on first four steps	
Student completes fifth step (writes full essay)	
Student completes sixth step (revises essay)	
Instructor offers feedback	
Instructor and student review writing strategy	
Instructor explains what goal-setting is	
Instructor explains total words written and demonstrates how to assess based on essay	
Instructor and student graph total words written	
Instructor explains number of transitions and demonstrates how to assess based on essay	
Instructor and student graph transitions	
Instructor explains number of paragraphs and demonstrates how to assess based on essay	
Instructor and student graph paragraphs	

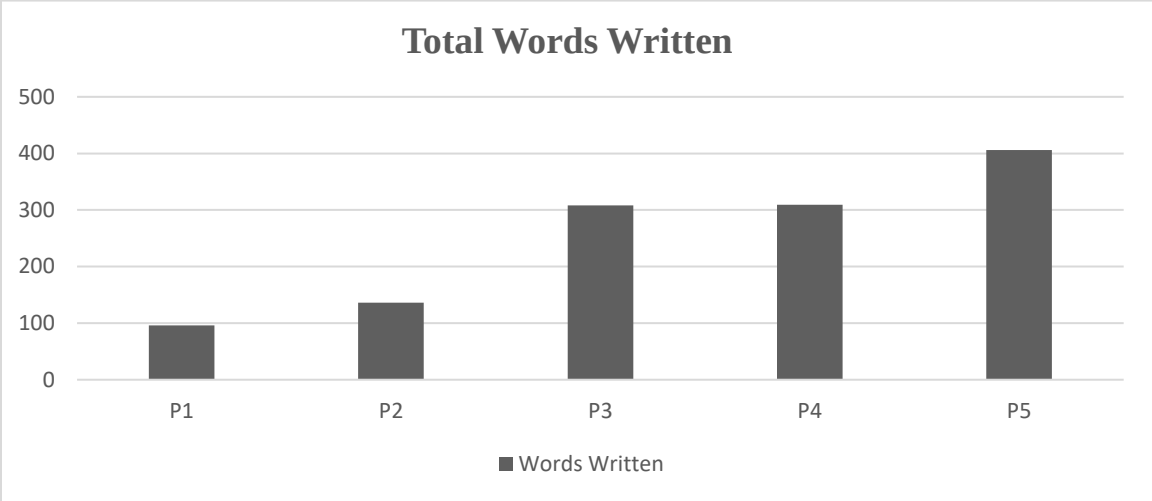
Post-Intervention Procedural Checklist

Task	**Observed** (Check only if task occurred)
Student reviews goals from previous session *(not applicable to post-intervention session 1)*	
Instructor sets timer for 45 minutes	
Student reads prompt and writes essay on computer	
Student stops writing when timer goes off (or prior to if student decides s/he is finished)	
Student reviews essay and graphs 3 goal-setting variables	
Student sets new goals for each (3) variable	

Appendix E

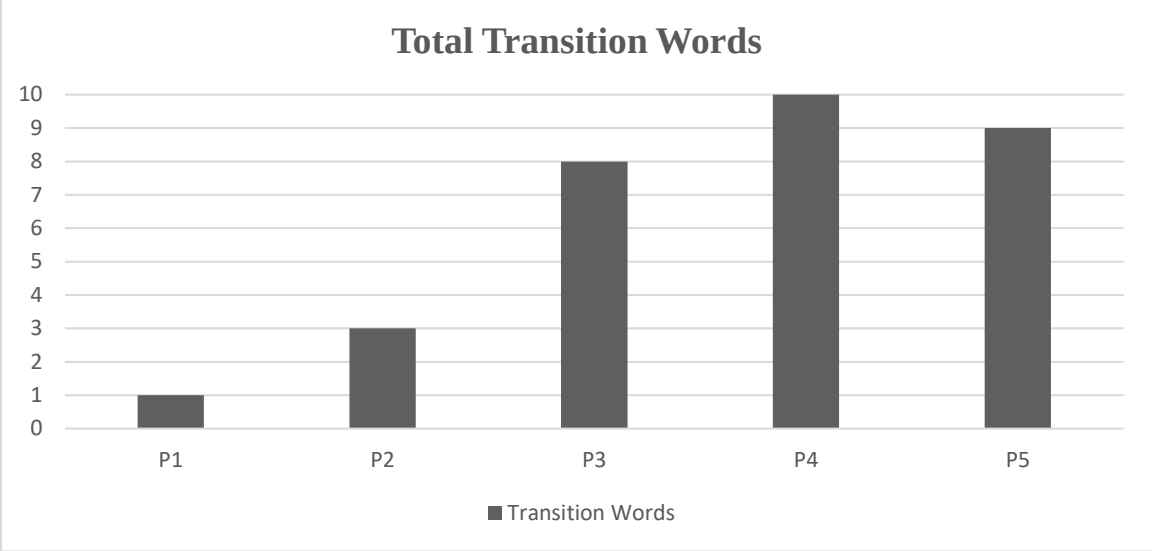
Post-Intervention Student Graphs for Variables Measured in Goal-Setting

Figure A1
Raphael's Total Words Written



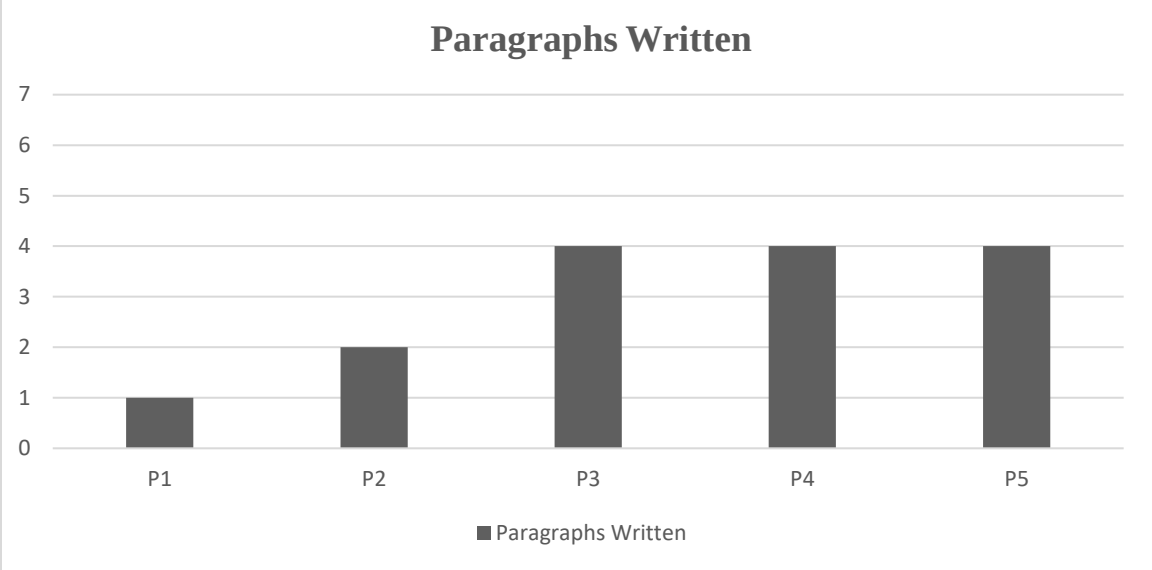
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Words Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	96	N/A	100-110
2	4	136	Yes	145-160
3	9	308	Yes	315-330
4	7	309	No	315-330
5	6	406	Yes	

Figure A2
Raphael's Total Transition Words



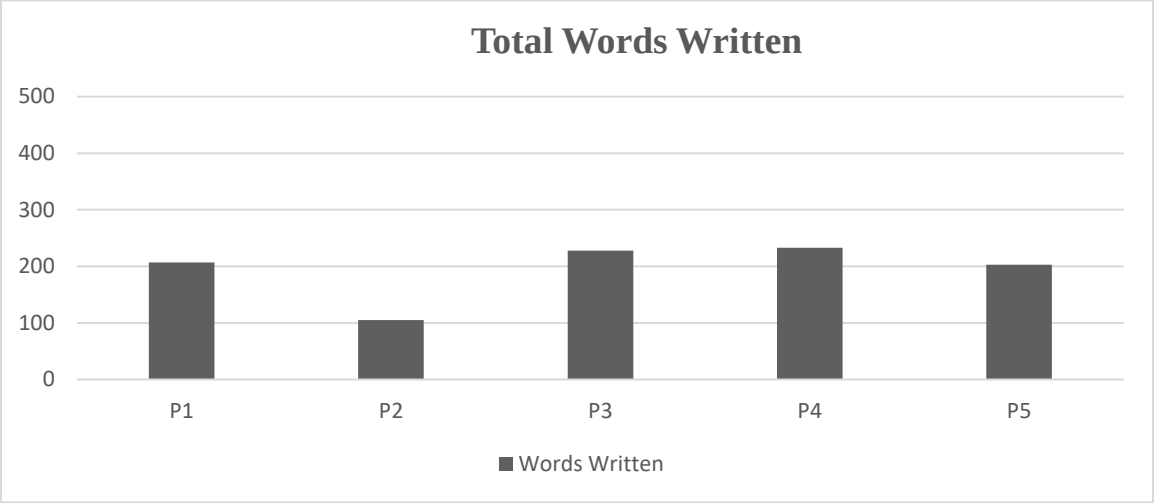
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Transition Words/Phrases Used	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	1	N/A	2-3
2	4	3	Yes	5-6
3	9	8	Yes	8-9
4	7	10	Yes	9-10
5	6	9	Yes	

Figure A3
Raphael's Total Paragraphs



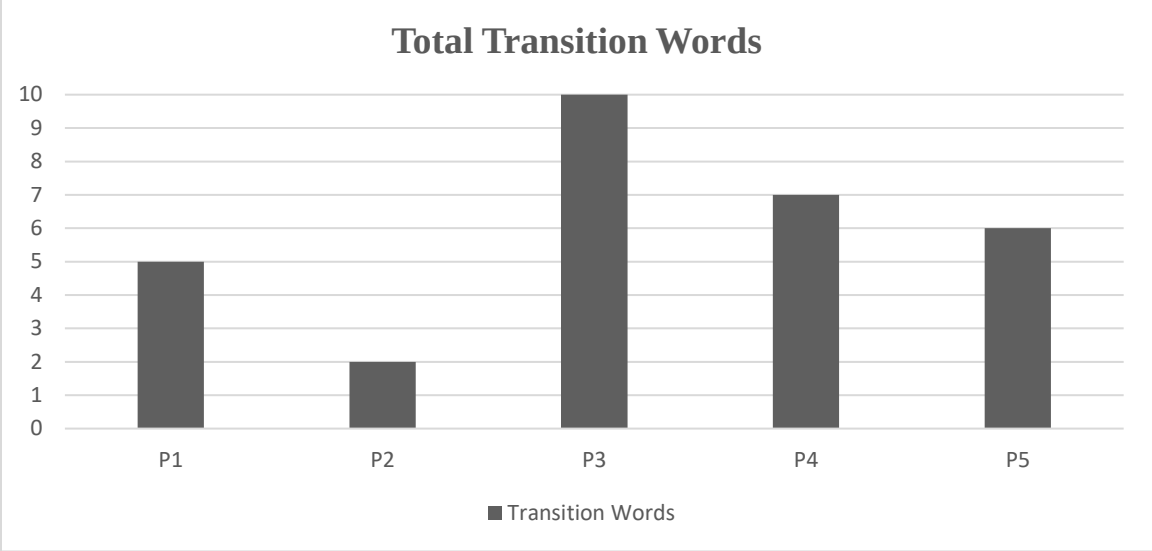
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Complete Paragraphs Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	1	N/A	2-3
2	4	2	Yes	3-4
3	9	4	Yes	4-5
4	7	4	Yes	4-5
5	6	4	Yes	

Figure A4
Mikey's Total Words Written



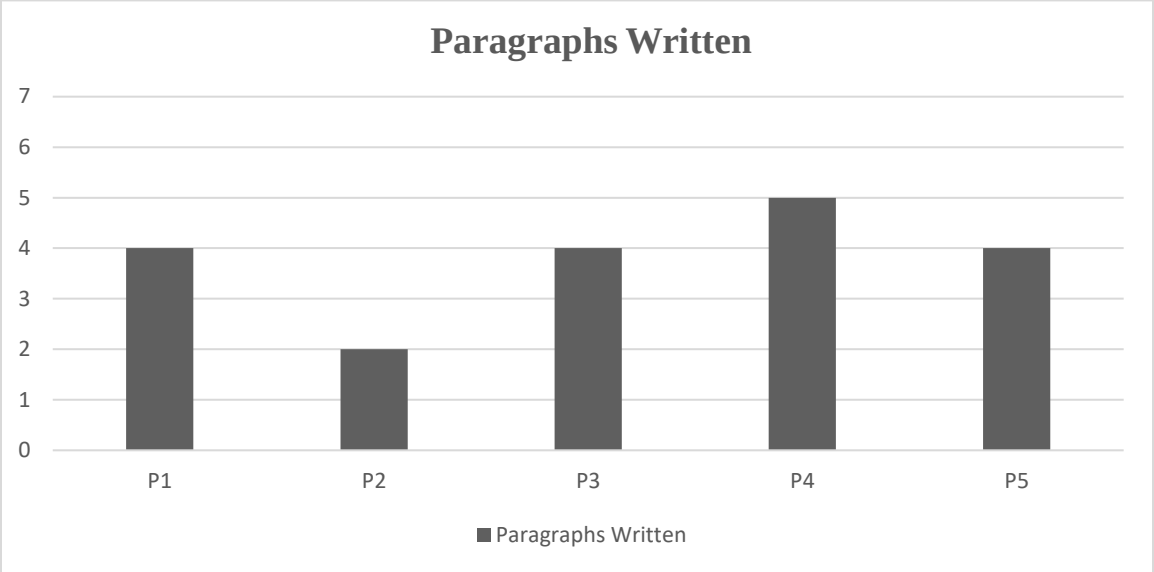
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Words Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	207	N/A	210-225
2	9	105	No	210-225
3	7	228	Yes	230-240
4	6	233	Yes	240-250
5	8	203	No	

Figure A5
Mikey's Total Transition Words



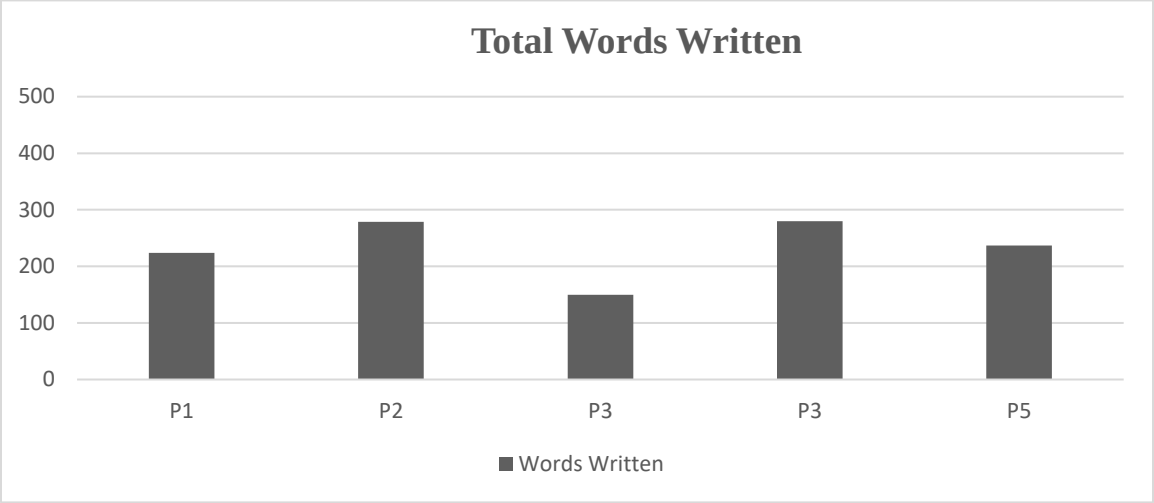
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Transition Words/Phrases Used	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	5	NA	6-7
2	9	2	No	6-7
3	7	10	Yes	10-11
4	6	7	No	8-9
5	8	6	No	

Figure A6
Mikey's Total Paragraphs



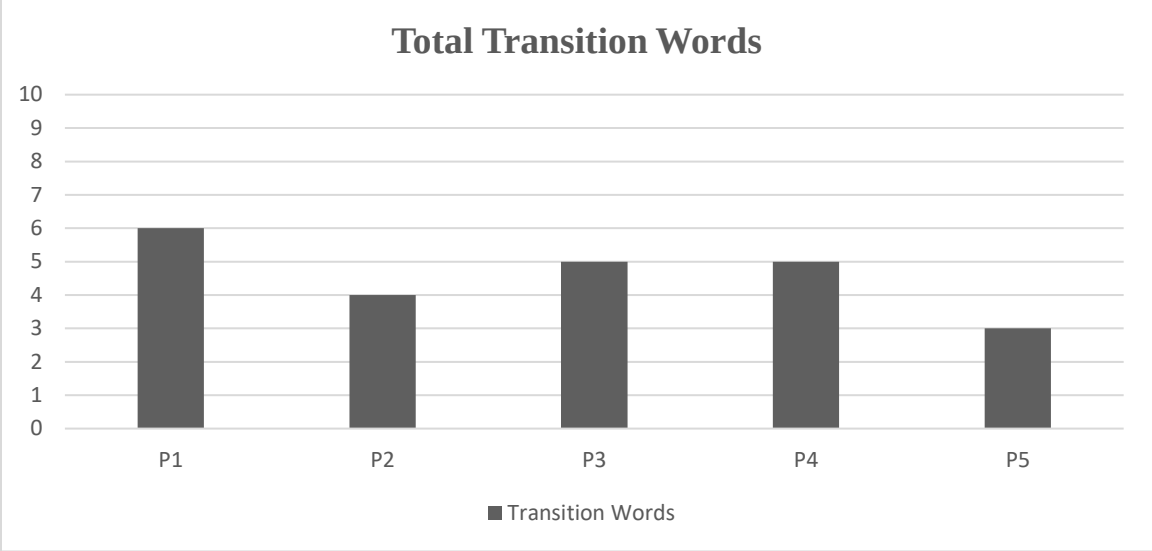
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Complete Paragraphs Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	4	NA	5-6
2	9	2	No	5-6
3	7	4	No	5-6
4	6	5	Yes	5-6
5	8	4	No	

Figure A7
Donny's Total Words Written



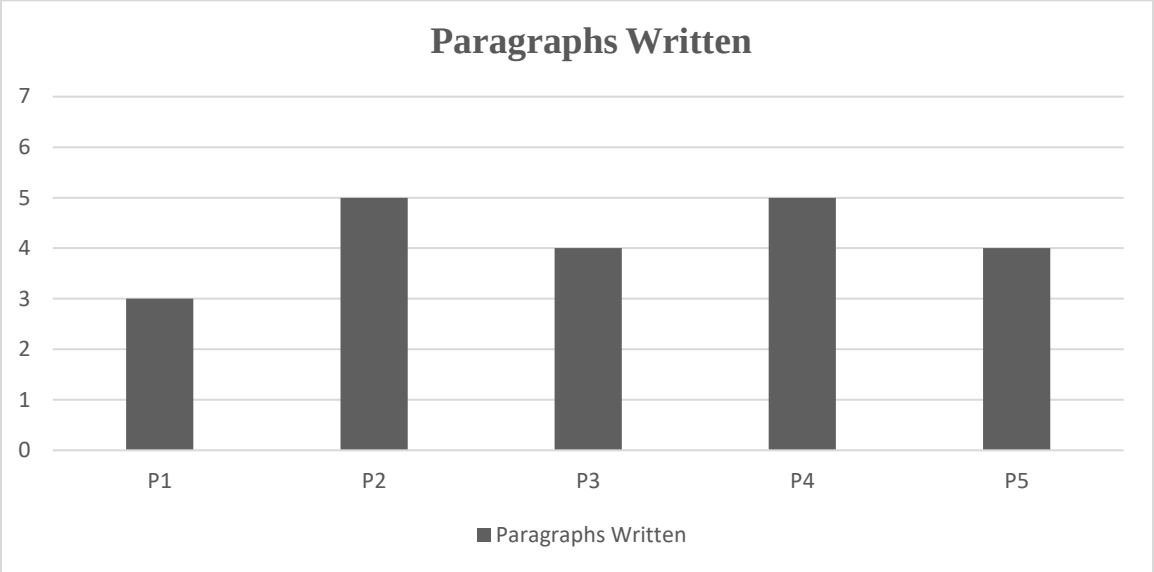
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Words Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	224	N/A	280-300
2	4	279	Yes	280-300
3	9	150	No	280-300
4	7	280	Yes	300-315
5	6	237	No	

Figure A8
Donny's Total Transition Words



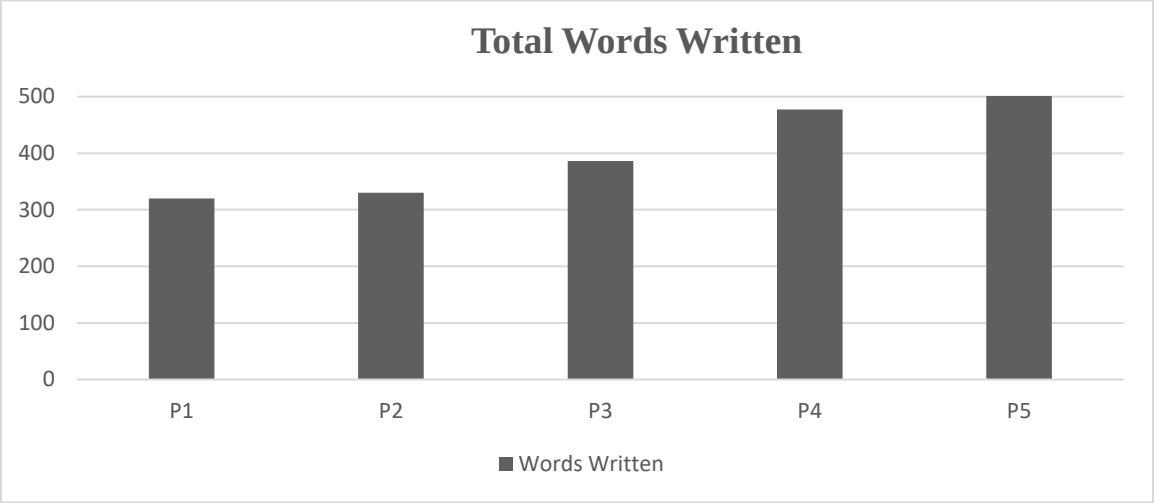
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Transition Words/Phrases Used	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	6	NA	6-7
2	4	4	No	5-6
3	9	5	Yes	6-7
4	7	5	No	6-7
5	6	3	No	

Figure A9
Donny's Total Paragraphs



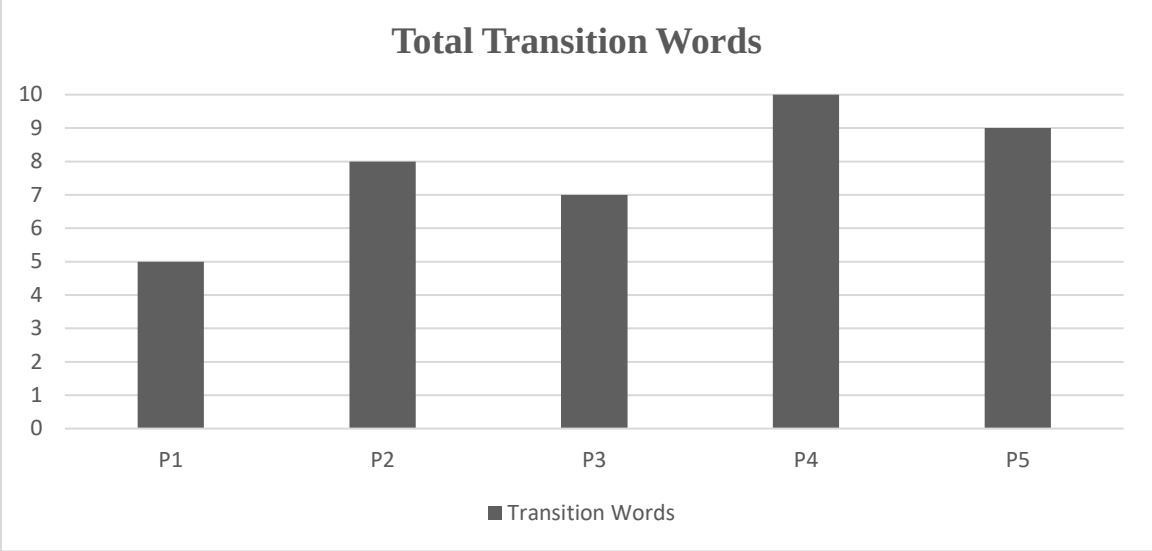
Post-Intervention Session	Prompt #	Complete Paragraphs Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	2	3	N/A	4-5
2	4	5	Yes	5-6
3	9	4	No	4-5
4	7	5	Yes	5-6
5	6	4	No	

Figure A10
Leo's Total Words Written



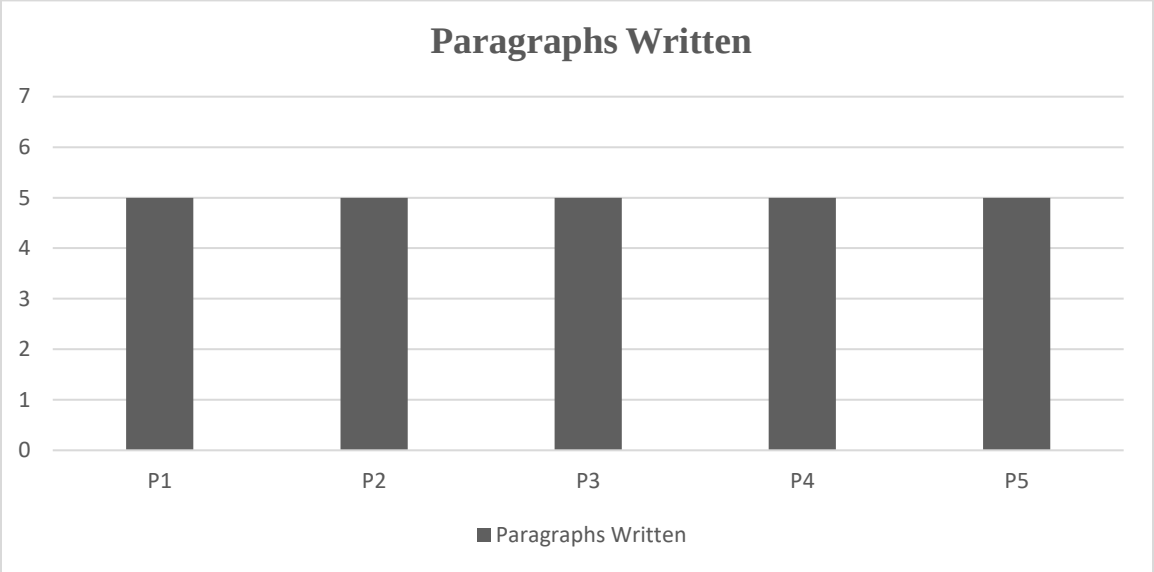
Session	Prompt #	Words Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	320	N/A	330-350
2	9	330	Yes	340-350
3	7	386	Yes	375-390
4	6	477	Yes	400-450
5	8	518	Yes	

Figure A11
Leo's Total Transition Words



Session	Prompt #	Transition Words/Phrases Used	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	5	NA	6-7
2	9	8	Yes	7-8
3	7	7	Yes	7-8
4	6	10	Yes	8-10
5	8	9	Yes	

Figure A12
Leo's Total Paragraphs



Session	Prompt #	Complete Paragraphs Written	Previous Goal Met?	New Goal Range
1	4	5	NA	5-6
2	9	5	Yes	5-6
3	7	5	Yes	5-6
4	6	5	Yes	5-6
5	8	5	Yes	