

**October 28, 2019**

**TO:** Education Committee of the JJPOC

**FROM:** Peter Leone

**RE:** Follow-up to JJPOC Meeting, October 17, 2019

On Thursday, October 17, I presented recommendations from the Education Committee to the JJPOC. Maria Pirro-Simmons, Superintendent of USD#1 also presented about the education program at Manson and York. I had to leave the meeting to catch a plane and did not hear the last few minutes of discussion. However, I was able to view the video of the meeting and hear comments and suggestions from members of the JJPOC and visitors to the meeting.

Delegate Toni Walker, JJPOC Co-chair, in her closing statements reminded members of the JJPOC and those in attendance of the importance of having data about student performance. This is essential to assess current programs and activities as well as measuring programs and student outcomes in a redesigned system.

Another member of the JJPOC, Sarah Eagan from the Office of the Child Advocate, also commented on next steps regarding education for incarcerated youth in the state. While the OCA is currently updating its January 2019 report,<sup>1</sup> findings from this report are instructive and may guide recommendations from the education committee. In its Executive Summary to this most recent report, the:

*OCA found that, with regard to incarcerated youth, there are few, and in some cases, no universal standards in Connecticut law or agency practices regarding a) the provision of mental health services; b) the use of isolation or force; c) strategies to prevent or respond to youth suicidal/self-harming behavior; d) **provision of educational services**; e) family engagement and relationship building... (p.5)*

The OCA report discussed at some length the guidance letter issued jointly by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, the joint letter emphasized education rights of youth with disabilities under federal and state law. Documents and reports provided by USD#1 and USD#2 suggest that a) minimal data are currently collected with regard to student performance and rate of participation, b) data are not reported to CDE that allows evaluation of education programs for incarcerated youth, and c) there are discrepancies between attendance figures and suspension figures provided by several sources.

I believe it is imperative that the education committee take proactive steps to address issues identified by the OCA and the Tow Youth Justice 2017 report on education.<sup>3</sup> One step might be a review and revise the most recent committee recommendations. The committee might clarify and perhaps expand on some of the recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Youth Advocate. (2019, January 19). INCARCERATED/DETAINED YOUTH - AN EXAMINATION OF CONDITIONS OF CONFINEMENT.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Education and United States Department of Justice, Guidance, available on the web at: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/letter120814.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Tow Youth Justice Initiative. (2017). Transforming Education in Connecticut's Justice System.