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EDUCATION WITHIN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

Juvenile justice system (JJS) – While the criminal justice system (CJS) refers to the prison and court systems for adults, the JJS is a separate court system specifically for people under the age of 18.

Minor or juvenile – An individual younger than 18 years old.

Incarcerated – Imprisoned or confined.

Topics like prison reform, policing, and law and order are often brought up when discussing criminal justice. Education within prisons, however, is discussed much less frequently—especially when it comes to the **juvenile justice system (JJS)**.

Today, approximately 25,000 **minors** are **incarcerated** in the juvenile justice system (“Highlights From the 2020 Juvenile Residential Facility Census,” 2022). By law, school-aged minors are required to attend school and receive an education (Salinger, 2018). However, only 65% of juvenile justice prisons have educational programming for all students (Read and O’Cummings, 2011). Even those 65% of facilities have significant gaps in education provided, especially for students with disabilities.

Juvenile justice education is rarely discussed, and most people are unaware about the systems set up for minors accused and convicted of crimes. This has led to inadequate data about the education received by these minors and a lack of accountability for juvenile justice facilities. Politicians disagree about how (and whether) to fund better programs for these vulnerable youth.

EXPLANATION OF THE ISSUE

Historical Development

Throughout the 1800s, juveniles as young as seven years old who committed punishable crimes could face criminal charges, prison time, and potentially death penalty sentences. In 1899, the Juvenile

Rehabilitative –

To restore someone.

In this case, rehabilitation means preparing minors to re-join the public after incarceration.

Punitive –

Purposefully meant to punish.

Only 33% of formerly incarcerated minors return to school upon being released.

Just 65% of juvenile justice prisons have educational programming for all minors in their facility.

Only 13 states have equivalent educational opportunities available for incarcerated youth.

Court Act in Illinois created the first court system with separate criminal trials for juveniles and adults (Small, 1997).

Juvenile courts were originally established with the goal of being more **rehabilitative** and less **punitive** than traditional, adult criminal courts (Feld, 2000). Judges in these juvenile courts would often consider juveniles’ upbringings and other life experiences when determining how and whether to punish minors.

National political discussions about being “tough on crime” and establishing “law and order” in the 1980s and 1990s put a spotlight on state juvenile court systems. Many states shifted the priorities of their juvenile justice systems from rehabilitation towards punishment.

This trend towards greater punishment lessened in the early 2000s. New brain studies provided evidence of the impulsivity and less-developed decision-making capacities of minors. Many states shifted focus back towards the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth (Puzzanchera et al., 2022).

While all *states* currently have a juvenile justice system and juvenile-specific prisons, it is important to note that the *federal* criminal court system does not have a separate division or separate prisons for juveniles. This means that juveniles prosecuted and convicted for federal crimes, usually by national agencies like the Drug Enforcement Agency, Border Patrol, or Federal Bureau of Investigation, are sentenced to serve time in prisons with adults (Puzzanchera et al., 2022). In many states, juveniles under the age of 18 can also be prosecuted under the adult justice system and imprisoned in adult state facilities if they are convicted of more serious crimes.

Scope of the Problem

Education Deficits in the Juvenile Justice System

Only 65% of nationwide juvenile justice facilities provide all students with access to some form of education (Read and O’Cummings, 2011). The most recent data available shows that just 13 states offer incarcerated students educational curriculum and courses that are equivalent to schools outside of the juvenile justice system (“Locked Out,” 2015). Many incarcerated students enter the juvenile justice system over two years behind their grade level in reading and math skills (Tannis, 2014). This education gap widens when facilities lack the proper educational materials or resources to support struggling students (Salinger, 2018).

Researchers have established a strong connection between academic achievement and lower crime rates; students who graduate from high school are significantly less likely to become involved in the juvenile or adult justice systems (Leone and Weinberg, 2012). Strong educational opportunities within the JJS give juveniles a

better rate of success when they return to their communities (Tannis, 2014).

While 90% of formerly incarcerated minors say they want and plan to return to traditional school when they leave the juvenile justice system, only one in three actually do so (McCluskey, 2017). The reasons for this range from youth lacking proper academic records, to not being able to reintegrate into their community, to not having supportive adult figures able to help.

Disproportionate Incarceration of Marginalized Groups

The juvenile justice system population is overwhelmingly made up of juveniles who have dropped out of school, are low-income, are unhoused, have been sexually abused, are Black, have a disability, are part of the foster care system, or are part of the LGBTQ+ community (Tannis, 2014). These already vulnerable minors often arrive in the juvenile justice system having experienced traumatic events and lacking support at home.

In 2019, 67% of 10-20 year-olds in the juvenile justice system were people of color (Puzzanchera et al., 2022). That same year, 41% of incarcerated juveniles were Black, a far higher percentage than the 14% of all American youth aged 10-20 who are Black.

In 2019, Black minors were 4.4 times more likely than white minors to be incarcerated; Indigenous minors were 3.2 times more likely, and Hispanic minors were about 1.3 times more likely (Rovner, 2023). Asian minors were 3.8 times less likely to be incarcerated than white minors.

Further, approximately 30% of incarcerated minors have a diagnosed disability (Segal, 2011). Some research indicates up to 70% of incarcerated juveniles have a diagnosable disability “ranging from emotional disability like bipolar disorder to learning disabilities like dyslexia” (Mader and Butrymowicz, 2014). This can be compared to the approximately 10% of non-incarcerated minors who have an identified disability.

40% of incarcerated girls and 3% of incarcerated boys identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. 85% of these queer juveniles are youth of color (“Unjust,” 2017).

Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Youth

Because youth who enter the JJS are particularly vulnerable and have disproportionately experienced trauma, they often require additional support and education services. Multiple reports by government and nonprofit agencies indicate that teachers, social workers, and staff within juvenile detentions lack the proper sensitivity and professional development training to de-escalate conflicts and educate their vulnerable population (Gagnon et al., 2015).

Race profile of youth ages 10–20, 2019:

Offense	Population	Residential placement
Total	100%	100%
White	52	33
Black	14	41
Hispanic	25	20
American Indian	1	2
Asian	5	1
Two or more	4	2

Note: Racial categories (i.e., White, Black, American Indian, and Asian) do not include youth of Hispanic ethnicity. The American Indian racial category includes Alaska Natives; the Asian racial category includes Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders. Totals include persons of unspecified race. Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Table with racial demographics of incarcerated youth versus racial percentages of the 2019 overall U.S. youth population. Puzzanchera et al., 2022

40% of incarcerated girls identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

30-70% of incarcerated minors are disabled.

Individual Education Program (IEP)

– A legal document that lists accommodations required for a disabled student to receive equal access to education. IEPs also outline goals for the student’s academic progress and success during the upcoming school year.

Furthermore, many juveniles enter the JJS already behind their grade level in school, meaning they need help to fill in the gaps in their education and catch up to their peers. Limited resources—or the absence of education programs—in juvenile justice facilities mean that these students, who are already struggling to keep up in school, fall even further behind their peers while they are incarcerated (Leone and Weinberg, 2012).

Education disparities are even greater for disabled incarcerated students (“K-12 Education,” 2018; Read, 2014). Many disabled minors enter the JJS with an **Individual Education Program (IEP)**, a legal plan that provides school accommodations that give disabled students an equal access to education as their peers (Segal, 2011). Just 46% of incarcerated juveniles whose IEPs had been identified during their sentencing reported that their academic accommodations were being met in prison (Read and O’Cummings, 2011).

Who Is Responsible?

Authority over curriculum, budget allocation, and school resources is divided between the federal government (including the Department of Education, Department of Justice, and Congress), state governments, and county/local-level governments. This split authority has led to confusion over whose responsibility it is to provide guidelines and resources for incarcerated youth (Tannis, 2014).

There is currently no mandatory, uniform standard for measuring and keeping track of the academic progress of incarcerated minors. This also means that there is a lack of clear data collected that could be used to examine the effectiveness of juvenile justice education.

Adding to this confusion, juveniles can be incarcerated in a range of facilities. 35% of incarcerated juveniles are housed in residential treatment centers, 28% in group homes, and 27% in detention centers (Read and O’Cummings, 2010). Over half of all incarcerated youth are housed in privately-owned—rather than state-owned—facilities, many of which are for-profit facilities. These varied forms of incarceration make it more difficult to know where to allocate resources.

Congressional Action

Congress has never passed legislation that is specifically about juvenile justice education. It has only passed legislation that addresses the juvenile justice system overall. This legislation has been overwhelmingly **bipartisan**.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, first passed in 1974, is the most prominent piece of legislation related to juvenile justice passed by Congress. The Act was most recently



Former President Donald J. Trump signs the Juvenile Justice Reform Act in 2018.

Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

Bipartisan –

Having support from both major political parties (Democrats and Republicans).



*Representative Jason Lewis (R-MN-2) introduced the 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act.
Official Congressional Portrait of Representative Lewis*

reauthorized in 2018 by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, or the JJRA (Lewis, 2018). The 2018 reauthorization was introduced by Representative Jason Lewis (R-MN-2) and cosponsored by Representative Robert Scott (D-VA-3). The vote to pass the JJRA was overwhelmingly bipartisan, with unanimous approval in the Senate and near-unanimous approval in the House of Representatives. The JJRA includes urgings to fix “disproportionate” incarceration of youth of color and emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed care for incarcerated juveniles.

Regarding juvenile justice education, the JJRA requires that states make it easier for youth to transfer academic credit to traditional schools when they leave the juvenile justice system (Harp, 2019). The JJRA also asks that states work with incarcerated youth to create a plan for their housing and education post-incarceration (Lewis, 2018).

Other pieces of legislation that involve juvenile justice have been intended to create community programs that keep youth out of jails. Two such bills were introduced (but have not yet been passed) in 2023: the RISE from Trauma Act in the Senate and the Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act in the House of Representatives.

The RISE from Trauma Act was sponsored by Senator Richard “Dick” Durbin (D-IL) and co-sponsored by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). If it passes, it will establish grants for local governments or organizations that create programs for vulnerable populations, including youth who have been involved in or are at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Durbin, 2023).

The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act was sponsored by Representative Andre Carson (D-IN-7) and co-sponsored by 12 other Democrats. If it passes, it will create grants for local governments or organizations that offer mentoring to “at-risk” students transitioning from middle to high school (Carson, 2023).

None of these bills, however, directly address gaps in education provided to incarcerated minors. And none of them outline specific curricular guidelines or requirements to assess the academic progress of incarcerated juveniles.

Other Policy Action

Oversight and authority over juvenile justice education is divided between the federal, state, and local governments. Large portions of juvenile justice education are managed by county and city boards of education; prisons in different areas of the same state may have different academic regulations.

Federal agencies have adopted policies that create greater oversight over juvenile justice education. In 1978, the U.S. Department of Justice started Project READ to evaluate the reading levels of incarcerated youth (Hodges et al., 1994).

Vocational training –

Training that prepares someone to do a specific job. This could include coding, farming, electrical engineering, etc.

Certain states have taken steps to ensure their incarcerated minors receive an education. For example, Florida’s 1986 Dropout Prevention and Academic Intervention Act mandates that every juvenile justice facility offers academic opportunities to all students (Blomberg and Waldo, 2002). This includes giving minors the chance to complete their high school diploma or receive **vocational training**.

IDEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS

Overview

On the topic of juvenile justice education, the liberal versus conservative positions are not well-defined. This is in large part because juvenile justice education is not talked about often enough for either major political party to have an official stance.

Overall, politicians support community programs that reduce juvenile crime. For example, the 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act was unanimously approved by the Senate and almost-unanimously approved by the House of Representatives. It was then signed by Donald Trump, a Republican president.

Conservatives and liberals disagree, however, about how much money to allocate to these programs, as well as what type of education curriculum and programs should be offered within the JJS. The following distinctions between conservative and liberal perspectives on juvenile justice education are general and not true for all members of either party; you are encouraged to do more research to find out what your specific representative believes.

Conservative View

Conservatives tend to favor tougher punishment over rehabilitation. They are more likely to oppose greater spending on education and social welfare. Conservatives tend to believe the purpose of the juvenile justice system is to protect society from criminal behavior, and they are less sympathetic towards helping juveniles who have been found guilty under the law.

In theory, conservatives support expanding juvenile justice education, but they are less likely to want to increase the amount of money spent on it. Conservatives are likely to argue that, if spending should be increased in any area, it should be in public schools, not in prisons for juveniles who have committed a crime.

Liberal View

Liberals tend to favor rehabilitation over punitive sentencing. They are more likely to advocate for progressive policies to reduce juvenile incarceration, especially for non-violent crimes. Liberals are

The 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act was passed with unanimous, bipartisan Senate support and near-unanimous House support.

Recidivism –

When someone who has previously been incarcerated commits a similar crime again after being released from prison.

also more likely to favor increased spending on educational programs and community-based programs that help juveniles’ rehabilitation and reduce rates of **recidivism**.

Liberals are more likely to advocate for increased spending on juvenile justice education. They are more likely to see incarcerated minors as a vulnerable population in need of extra support and services.

AREAS OF DEBATE

Juvenile justice education, itself, is not a very politically controversial issue. Instead, debate in Congress lies in how and what programs should be implemented.

The primary policy debates regarding juvenile justice education are over funding and the types of programming that should be offered to minors. This debate is less politically polarized than many other, more frequently discussed issues.

Oversight of education and policies in juvenile justice education is split between the federal, state, and local governments. When creating policy solutions for this issue, it is important to consider what type of facility and location you are addressing. Are your policies just for education in federal prisons, which the Department of Education and Labor has direct authority over? Or are you trying to provide federal guidelines (ex. mandatory information collection or teacher training) for state and privately-owned institutions? Your policy approach will depend on what population of incarcerated youth you are hoping to reach.

Prevention Programs

Diversion/diversion policies –
Meant to redirect students away from criminal behavior and towards school or other activities.

The most frequently proposed policies regarding the juvenile justice system involve creating programs to prevent crime from occurring. These **diversion policies** do not specifically address juvenile justice education, itself, but rather aim to keep students in traditional schools and stop them from entering the JJS (Mendel, 2018).

These proposals include after-school programs, hiring additional school counselors in high-risk neighborhoods, and mentoring clubs (Tannis, 2014). All of these policies are meant to stop the **school-to-prison pipeline** (Salsich, 2013).

School-to-prison pipeline (STPP) –
Describes a pattern in which students who misbehave in school or are suspended are “pushed out” of school and later become involved in the juvenile justice system.

Advocates have also urged that counties increase funding for school counselors. These counselors would work with students and provide tools for emotional development and anger management. Advocates suggest that, rather than immediately suspending students for misbehavior, minors could be redirected towards school counselors who have been trained to de-escalate conflict.

Advocates of diversion policies point to prevention programs’ success in reducing youth crime, particularly in neighborhoods with higher crime rates. Opponents of diversion policies are frequently against additional governmental spending. Juvenile justice

education advocates, who largely support diversion policies, are also likely to point out that focusing only on preventing crime does not help vulnerable juveniles who are already incarcerated.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

Both conservatives and liberals are in favor of reducing juvenile crime. Policies meant to prevent juvenile crime have received support from both political parties, most recently in the bipartisan 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act.

Politicians of different parties disagree, however, on how much money to spend on these programs. Conservatives are less likely than liberals to want to increase government spending to create additional diversion programs. Politicians of both parties are likely to disagree about whether funding should go directly to state and local governments, to nonprofit JJS facilities, to for-profit JJS facilities, or to all of the above.

Universal Federal Education Guidelines

All states have guidelines requiring *non-incarcerated* minors to attend school and imposing punishments on parents whose children do not go to school (“Free and Compulsory School Age Requirements,” 2020). However, there is no universal rule enforcing whether *incarcerated* juveniles are attending classes. This absence of a universal mandate means that, according to the most recent data available, just 65% of juvenile justice facilities provided education to all incarcerated minors (Read and O’Cummings, 2011).

Congressional legislation could address this education gap by requiring that all federal-run and state-run juvenile justice facilities provide educational opportunities to all incarcerated youth (Tannis, 2014). Another option would be for Congress to provide grants or other incentives for states that adopt policies that guarantee that incarcerated minors are included in their state’s mandate that minors receive an education.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

It is likely that this type of solution would receive mixed support and opposition from both conservatives and liberals.

Proponents will believe this type of solution has the potential to close the gap in education between incarcerated and non-incarcerated minors. Opponents, who are more likely to be conservatives, might be against federal intervention in state education policies.

Educational Programming and Federal Grants

One way for Congress to address gaps between education provided in traditional public schools and schools within the juvenile justice system is to approve additional educational funding. Like

All states have requirements for non-incarcerated youth to attend school, but not every state has similar requirements for incarcerated youth.

Just 15 states track whether formerly incarcerated minors ultimately earn their high school diploma.

General Educational Development (GED) –

GED tests can be taken by anyone over the age of 16. They offer an alternative to earning a traditional high school diploma for those who did not graduate from high school.

portions of the 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act, this funding could come in the form of federal grants given to state or local-level governments who submit proposals for additional educational offerings for incarcerated minors. This funding could also help introduce educational programming to juvenile justice facilities that currently do not offer academic courses.

Advocates disagree about what type of education should be offered to incarcerated minors. Some argue that vocational skill training should be offered so that minors have an easier time finding a job when they are released (“Unjust,” 2017). Others argue that solely providing vocational training limits a juvenile’s future options. Instead of (or in addition to) vocational training, these advocates believe prisons should provide courses that contribute to incarcerated students earning their high school diploma or **General Educational Development (GED)** certificate. Others say that juvenile justice education should also provide college-level courses to juveniles who have graduated from high school or earned their GED.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

There is currently no federal or state mandate that specific courses, curriculum, or resources be offered to incarcerated minors. Because this issue has yet to be addressed specifically by Congress, it is not clear exactly how each party would vote on this type of funding.

It is likely, however, that conservatives would argue against increased funding. Conservatives are less likely to feel sympathy towards incarcerated minors. They are more likely—but not certain—to say that, if funding should be increased anywhere, it should be in traditional public schools or in preventative community programs.

Liberals, meanwhile, are more likely to support this type of funding increase. They may still disagree, however, on what type of educational offerings should be provided in juvenile justice facilities.

Oversight and Data Collection

Currently, there is little data tracking the academic success (specifically in reading and math) of incarcerated juveniles throughout their time in the juvenile justice system (Tannis, 2014). There is also a lack of data about the outcomes of minors after they leave the JJS; just 15 states track whether formerly incarcerated minors ultimately earn their high school diploma, and only 12 states track enrollment in college (“Locked Out,” 2015).

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides some oversight and guidance for juvenile justice facilities, but they have not been given the authority to require that all juvenile justice facilities keep track of minors’ academic achievements.



The logo of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

OJJDP Website

Congress could require state education and justice departments to track information like juveniles’ academic progress inside the JJS, whether they complete their high school diploma or GED, or whether these minors are ever incarcerated again in the future (“Locked Out,” 2015). This type of information could provide invaluable insights for politicians, educators, and advocates as they seek to craft better policies for incarcerated youth.

Congress also has the opportunity to mandate that state education and justice departments record the precise academic courses offered to incarcerated youth, how many hours and days per week incarcerated students are in the classroom, how often they are disciplined, and whether disabled students’ educational needs are being met (“Locked Out,” 2015).

Further, unlike traditional schools, in many states, schools within juvenile justice facilities are not required to undergo rigorous assessment and accreditation by independent, nationally known organizations (“Locked Out,” 2015). Congress has the power to require that these accreditation processes take place in juvenile justice facilities, too.

Political Perspectives on this Solution

The 2018 Juvenile Justice Reform Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, included sections that called for increased data collection about the academic and social success of incarcerated youth after incarceration. Because of this, it seems possible that members of both parties would be open to passing further legislation that expands governmental oversight over juvenile justice education.

Training for Juvenile Justice Facility Staff

Incarcerated minors have complex needs. Many are behind in school, have experienced trauma, or have specific IEP accommodations due to disabilities. This means that educators and staff within juvenile justice facilities need to be especially well-trained to meet their students’ needs. However, prison staff and educators are frequently ill-equipped to teach students with specific needs (Leone and Weinberg, 2012). This is an even greater issue for disabled students with educational needs that cannot be met by untrained staff (Read, 2014).

One potential way to address this would be for Congress to mandate that all educators in the JJS receive specific types of training—for example, trauma-informed training or training for teaching disabled students (Puzzanchera, 2022).

Another option might be for Congress to provide grants to state and local governments that commit to providing additional training and professional development opportunities for JJS educators (Tannis, 2014).



*The Office of
Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency
Prevention
celebrates 45 years
since the initial
passage of the
Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency
Prevention Act in
1974.*

OJJDP Website

Political Perspectives on this Solution

Politicians of both parties are unlikely to be opposed to the idea of equipping teachers with the tools to properly teach incarcerated students.

However, politicians are likely to disagree on the amount of spending that should be allocated to this initiative. Liberals are more likely than conservatives to want to increase spending. Conservatives may also be more hesitant than liberals to impose federal requirements on the education practices of individual states. Conservatives and liberals might also have differing opinions on what training should encompass.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

As of 2020, 40 states spent an average of at least \$100,000 per year per incarcerated juvenile. In New York, the cost to hold a single juvenile in solitary confinement could be up to \$900,000 per year (“Sticker Shock 2020: The Cost of Youth Incarceration”).

Because most incarcerated juveniles are in state prisons (as opposed to federal prisons), funding proposals from the House Education and Labor Committee will likely take the form of grants given to state/local governments or to nonprofit organizations.

For Fiscal Year 2024, President Biden requested a \$90 billion budget for the Department of Education, including \$20.5 billion for schools in areas with high poverty rates and \$16.8 billion to support students with disabilities (“Budget of the U.S. Government: Fiscal Year 2024”). The budget also allocates \$760 million from the Department of Justice’s budget for juvenile justice programs. The White House’s proposal does not specifically mention education funding for incarcerated youth. Almost any proposed solution to this problem will involve greater governmental spending or reallocating current government spending.

CONCLUSION

All states require minors up to a certain age to be enrolled in school. However, the same requirements are not applied or enforced when it comes to juvenile justice facilities. Minors often enter the juvenile justice system behind in school and require additional support and services to catch up to their grade level. Nevertheless, numerous studies over the past several decades have shown that the juvenile justice system is not providing sufficient programming to meet the educational needs of incarcerated youth.

Congress has demonstrated bipartisan support for legislation that prevents juvenile crime and creates diversionary community

programs. Congress has yet to pass legislation specific to juvenile justice education, however. This gap has created a lack of oversight and accountability for the education of these youth. Politicians on both sides of the aisle are likely to be willing to pass legislation on this topic, but they disagree about what types of programs and how much funding should be provided.

Juvenile justice education is not often discussed or considered, making it important that Congress acts on this issue. The minors incarcerated in the juvenile justice system are often among the most vulnerable members of society. Most of them are either school dropouts, disabled, people of color, survivors of abuse, foster youth, unhoused, or part of the LGBTQ+ community. Providing incarcerated youth with educational opportunities ensures that some of the most at-risk members of our society are given the ability to rehabilitate and become better community members when they leave prison.

There are many potential policies that could help address problems in juvenile justice education. You should feel empowered to use any of the ideas outlined in this briefing, combine proposals, and come up with your own.

GUIDE TO FURTHER RESEARCH

Most of the information cited in this briefing comes from reports by governmental organizations and nonprofits that advocate for education access and/or juvenile justice reform. The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children & Youth and the Education Commission of the States have particularly extensive and helpful information. Almost all sources cited in this document are linked in the bibliography below. If you need help finding anything, please feel free send a message to our committee email.

As you conduct further research, I highly encourage you to consult the following three reports/fact sheets for additional information: Terry Salinger’s 2018 “[Adolescent Literacy Guide](#)” for the National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth, Puzzanchera et al.’s 2022 “[National Report](#)” for the National Center for Juvenile Justice, and Read and O’Cummings’ 2011 “[Fact Sheet: Juvenile Justice Education](#)” for the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center. I also encourage you to look at [Caren Harp’s summary](#) of the 2018 bipartisan Juvenile Justice Reform Act to generate policy ideas that build upon existing policy.

GLOSSARY

Bipartisan – Having support from both major political parties (Democrats and Republicans).

Diversion/diversion policies – Meant to redirect students away from criminal behavior and towards school or other activities.

Incarcerated – Imprisoned or confined.

Individual Education Program (IEP) – A legal document that lists accommodations required for a disabled student to receive equal access to education. IEPs also outline goals for the student’s academic progress and success during the upcoming school year.

Juvenile justice system (JJS) – While the criminal justice system (CJS) refers to the prison and court systems for adults, the JJS is a separate court system specifically for people under the age of 18.

Minor/juvenile – An individual younger than 18 years old.

Rehabilitative – To restore someone. In this case, rehabilitation means preparing minors to re-join the public after incarceration.

Punitive – Purposefully meant to punish.

Recidivism – When someone who has previously been incarcerated commits a similar crime again after being released from prison.

School-to-prison pipeline – Describes a pattern in which students who misbehave in school or are suspended are “pushed out” of school and later become involved in the juvenile justice system.

Vocational training – Training that prepares someone to do a specific job. This could include coding, farming, electrical engineering, etc.

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