

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Triennial Evaluation Report

Title I Program for Neglected & Delinquent Students

2004-2005

District Strategic Direction: Academic Excellence

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Debra Heath



ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Triennial Evaluation Report Title I Program for Neglected/Delinquent Students

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albuquerque Public Schools receives federal Title I – Part D funding to support educational services for children who are considered “neglected” or “delinquent.” Federal law requires APS to evaluate its Title I program for neglected or delinquent (N/D) students once every three years. This first triennial evaluation produced the following key conclusions and recommendations:

1. APS’ use of Title I funds complies with federal law and state mandates. However, the amount of Title I funding available for N/D sites and the characteristics of N/D students limit the intensity, duration and scope of Title I services.

- APS’ Title I N/D program allocated a total of \$183,455 to 12 N/D sites in 2004-05. Together they provided Title I services to a total of 1,850 students.
- With Title I funds, 2 N/D sites provided comprehensive educational services while the majority provided after-school tutoring and/or other supplemental educational services.
- Students averaged only 41 continuous days per N/D site.

2. A relatively small proportion of N/D students have APS as a transition destination.

- Charter schools and alternative schools are more likely than traditional public schools to offer the supports that N/D students need to succeed, for example small enrollments, low pupil-teacher ratios and staff who are trained to work with troubled youth.

3. A host of barriers confront N/D students who wish to transition back to APS schools.

- Schools’ enrollment practices often deter N/D students from enrolling.
- Funding formulas and accountability pressures encourage schools to hold onto N/D students only as long as needed to capture 40th day student funding. Dropped early enough in the school year, students will not affect a school’s accountability rating.
- Schools often lack the therapeutic and social support services needed by many N/D students to be successful.
- Because funds do not follow students when they transfer schools, APS alternative schools do not have sufficient funding to serve all the N/D students who need their services.
- N/D sites do not consistently involve APS staff in placement planning and do not always ensure that complete discharge papers arrive at transition destinations.

5. Improving the outcomes of N/D students (which could affect APS school and district accountability ratings) likely requires new APS policies, new funding provisions, and an explicit charge to track and ensure the continuity and quality of N/D student education.

- A representative workgroup would be best suited to craft specific recommendations.
- Increased funding for alternative schools may be required, perhaps from Title I – Part A.
- APS’ Title I Homeless Program may provide a useful model for serving N/D students.

6. Future Title I N/D program evaluations should describe and assess APS efforts to address N/D student needs. Paired with a system for tracking N/D student outcomes, continued formative evaluation could help APS develop and enhance N/D student policies and practices.

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BACKGROUND

Albuquerque Public Schools receives federal Title I – Part D funding to support educational services for children who are considered “neglected” or “delinquent” or who reside in correctional facilities within its attendance boundaries. APS’ Title I office, within the Teaching and Learning Systems department, manages APS’ Title I program for Neglected or Delinquent (N/D) students. The Research, Development and Accountability department (RDA) manages data collection for the Title I N/D program, and produces state and federally required reports.

Title I-D Funding Purposes and Expectations

Title I – Part D funding is intended to support educational services in residential institutions for children and youth under the age of 21 who are “neglected” or “delinquent” as well as youth in correctional facilities.¹ *Neglected* is a term used for children and youth who are committed or voluntarily placed in an institution due to abandonment, neglect or death of their parents or guardians. *Delinquent* is a term for youth who have been adjudicated delinquent or in need of supervision.

The primary purposes of Title I – Part D federal program funding, as contained in the 2001 “No Child Left Behind” reauthorization, are to:

1. Educate students residing in or returning from N/D sites,
2. Facilitate successful transitions from N/D sites to school or employment, and
3. Operate drop-out prevention programs in local schools.²

Title I – Part D funds also may be used to support health and social services and programs for “at-risk” children, if there is a likelihood that providing such services and programs will help these children complete their education.³

Regarding the educational uses of Title I – Part D funds, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) has verbally communicated more pragmatic expectations to the state’s school districts. Districts must use Part D funds to ensure that students receive education *while they*

¹ Funds also may be used to provide secondary school level instruction to youth under 21 years of age who are in adult correctional facilities. Starting in 2005-06, New Mexico’s Public Education Department clarified that Part D funds are allocated only for institutions serving delinquent children. Sites serving neglected children are to be supported with Part A funds.

² “An LEA receiving Part D, Subpart 2 funds *must use a portion of those funds to operate a dropout prevention program in a local school(s) that targets at-risk children and youth.*” [Title I Neglected or Delinquent Sites Non Regulatory Guidance, p 4]. However, “services to students at-risk of dropping out of school shall not have a negative impact on meeting the transitional and academic needs of students returning from correctional facilities.” [Title I, Part D Statute, Subpart 2, Sec. 1422 (d)].

³ Title I Neglected or Delinquent Sites Non Regulatory Guidance, p 24.

reside in N/D institutions. The PED acknowledges that Title I – Part D funding levels are inadequate for additionally accomplishing all the purposes contained in federal law.⁴

Nevertheless, federal officials and federal program technical assistance organizations continue to emphasize the expectation that Title I – Part D programs will facilitate and monitor student transitions from N/D sites to schools or employment. They also expect Title I – Part D programs to support and monitor the education of students who reenroll in local schools.

Moreover, federal legislation calls for LEAs to demonstrate impacts on student achievement and employment. States have the authority to reduce or terminate funding if a school district does not show improvements within 3 years in the following domains:

- Academic achievement,
- Credit accrual toward grade promotion and graduation,
- Dropout rates,
- Transition to further education,
- High school or GED completion, and
- Employment after discharge.

⁴ Verbal communication, meeting with PED representative, Diana Bateman, February 3, 2006.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation Purposes & Approach

Federal law requires LEAs to conduct an evaluation of their Title I – Part D programs at least once every 3 years. By law, evaluations should address the program’s impacts on student achievement, dropout, high school or GED completion, and transition to further education or employment. Federal law also asks N/D program evaluations to use district standards & assessments to the extent feasible.⁵

Discussions with APS Title I and N/D program staff in the spring of 2003 revealed that conducting an outcome evaluation of APS’ N/D program would be premature and possibly inappropriate. The following factors supported this conclusion:

- The 2004-05 school year was the first year that N/D sites collected Title I program data in a uniform manner⁶;
- Most N/D sites reported that they did not have access to outcome data;
- Students stay in most N/D programs for brief periods of time, making measurable academic progress difficult to achieve; and
- Students tend to leave APS’ largest N/D program without warning, rendering impossible the final assessments and discharge planning that would provide key outcome information.

Rather than attempting to evaluate Title I N/D program outcomes, RDA used an evaluability assessment and formative evaluation framework. Evaluability assessment is designed to clarify evaluation purposes and expectations, describe program operations, assess the plausibility of a program’s objectives, identify opportunities for improving program effectiveness, and suggest future evaluation designs. This evaluation set out to accomplish the following purposes:

1. Describe N/D program services;
2. Describe current transition processes, strengths and weaknesses;
3. Identify opportunities for N/D policy & program improvement; and
4. Suggest appropriate scope, measures & methods for future N/D program evaluations.

Through the course of conducting this evaluation of APS’ Title I program for neglected and delinquent students, RDA identified issues that affect a much larger group of youth than those who receive Title I services. Not all neglected or delinquent students receive services funded by APS’ Title I program. Some enroll in Title I - funded facilities but do not receive Title I services. Some enroll in facilities that do not receive Title I funding from APS. Other students have not yet been identified as neglected or delinquent or have not yet been channeled into the N/D system. The total number of neglected or delinquent students who pass through APS each year is unknown and would be complicated to estimate. What is known is that the number of N/D

⁵ Title I Neglected or Delinquent Sites Non-Regulatory Guidance, August 20, 2004, p. 6.

⁶ The NMPED also piloted its data collection form for one month in 2003-04.

students who receive APS Title I services is only a fraction of the total number of neglected or delinquent students that pass through APS.

Consequently, the concerns described in this report affect a much wider set of stakeholders than are included in the scope of this Title I evaluation. Multiple APS departments, programs and schools, as well as city and community agencies, all play a part in N/D student challenges and potential solutions. Perhaps the most important next step from this evaluation would be to convene a workgroup to study N/D student services and challenges more broadly and deeply, and to recommend viable solutions.

Evaluation Methods & Data Sources

RDA used a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches (See Table 1). N/D sites reported information about the students they served and the services they provided on an MS Excel spreadsheet. Requested information included students’ grade levels and length of placement, the curricular focus of Title I services, and students’ transition and academic outcomes. RDA collected qualitative data through interviews with key informants, meetings with N/D and APS representatives, and N/D sites’ narrative program reports.

Table 1. Triennial Program Evaluation Data Collection Methods and Sources.

Data Collection Methods	Data Sources
Key informant interviews	APS Transition Office APS Health/Mental Health Department La Academia de Esperanza Charter School UNM professor & special education expert
N/D site representatives meeting	N/D program staff
Annual reporting spreadsheets	N/D site records
N/D program narrative reports	N/D program staff

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: APS TITLE I PROGRAM FOR NEGLECTED AND DELINQUENT STUDENTS

The first purpose of this triennial evaluation is to describe APS' Title I program for neglected and delinquent children. Historically, APS' "program" has involved distributing funds to institutions for neglected or delinquent youth so those institutions can provide educational services and other support services to help N/D youth continue their education. During 2004-05, APS' Title I office held five consultation meetings with representatives of N/D sites. One purpose was to enhance coordination among individual N/D sites. Another purpose was to identify prospects for crafting a more unified Title I program that would be implemented across N/D sites.

APS allocated a total of \$183,455 to 12 Title I programs for neglected or delinquent youth in 2004-05.⁷ As outlined in Appendix A, individual allocations ranged from a low of \$1,130 to a high of \$56,000. Seven sites served 862 "neglected" students and three sites served 988 "delinquent" students, for a total of 1,850 students served.⁸

APS asked each N/D site to propose and implement its own set of Title I services. Most offered a wide range of services, which were partially but not completely supported with Title I funds.

Two of the larger N/D programs (Desert Hills and BCJDC) and one small long-term facility (Villa Santa Maria) offered comprehensive educational services for the duration of each student's residential stay. Other sites provided supplemental education services for children, many of whom continued their education at APS, charter or private schools, or at the local community college, Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute. In 2004-05, supplemental education services included tutoring, individualized & group instruction, computer-aided instruction, and GED preparation. Two facilities, Desert Hills and Hogares, also offered summer programs.

In addition to educational services, all of the N/D sites offered social support services, some of which were partly funded by Title I. These included case management, counseling, art therapy, life skills training and parent education, among other services.

As demonstrated in Appendix A, the duration per N/D student of most Title I services was relatively short. During 2004-05, students' average length of stay in an N/D institution was 41 days. Only 12% of N/D students (226 out of 1607 students) stayed in one facility 90 days or longer.

⁷ APS allocated a mix of Title I – Part A and Title I – Part D funds to N/D sites.

⁸ One N/D site did not provide program information and one site terminated its program.

DESCRIPTION OF NEGLECTED AND DELINQUENT TRANSITION PROCESSES & OUTCOMES

The second purpose of this triennial N/D program evaluation is to describe the systems and practices affecting N/D student transitions between educational institutions and N/D facilities. Current federal law states that Title I N/D programs “must be designed primarily to meet the transitional and academic needs of students returning from N/D facilities to local educational agencies or alternative education programs” from correctional and N/D facilities.⁹

Transitioning students successfully between institutions for neglected or delinquent children and educational institutions is a national problem. One study found that only 21% of youth released from correctional institutions nationally were in school 5 months after release.¹⁰ Another study found that only 1.6% of adjudicated Wisconsin youth returned to school and graduated post-release.¹¹

N/D Students’ Transition Goals and Outcomes

In Albuquerque, the actual transition outcomes of N/D students are largely unsubstantiated and often unknown. Representatives of APS’ largest N/D programs estimate that the actual placement of N/D students after discharge is unknown for as many as 60 percent of their participants. They cite the following reasons:

- Youth and their families are highly mobile;
- Many students transition to out-of-district or out-of-state programs;
- Courts release youth from BCJDC without notice and without discharge planning; and
- No consistent follow up tracking system has been established.

Most commonly, according to representatives from APS’ largest N/D sites, students end up transitioning to the following destinations:

- Charter schools;
- Out-of-district and out-of-state schools and programs; and
- Correctional facilities.

While APS is clearly the largest educational system in Albuquerque, only a fraction of youth exiting Albuquerque N/D institutions attempt to enroll in APS schools, according to N/D site representatives. As seen in Table 2, as few as 5% and no more than 25% of students in the three largest N/D Title I programs are estimated to have APS as a transition goal.

Representatives of APS’ largest N/D site, the Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center (BCJDC), report that most of their students wish to transition to GED programs.

⁹ Title I, Part D Statute, Subpart 2, Sec. 1422 (d).

¹⁰ Maddox & Webb, 1986, cited in Rutherford, R. The National Center of Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice. Presentation for the NDTAC Webinar, September 29, 2005.

¹¹ Haberman & Quinn, 1986, cited in Rutherford, R. (2005).

However, many students cannot read well enough to follow the GED computer-based coursework and assessments. Generally, BCJDC students return to school only if they've been court ordered to do so. In that case, they usually choose a charter or alternative school. According to representatives of BCJDC, only 8% of BCJDC students attempt to enroll in traditional APS schools.

The second largest N/D program within APS' network, Desert Hills, is a residential drug treatment center. Representatives estimate that 70% of summer school students transition to the Academia de Esperanza charter school, which is adjacent to Desert Hills. About 60% of their school-year program students transition to out-of-district programs, and about 25% intend to enroll in APS schools.

Students at the third largest N/D program, Hogares, tend to transition to its affiliated charter school or, less often, to jobs. Only 5% of students try to enroll in APS schools.

Table 2. Estimated Proportions of Students by Transition Goal and N/D Program¹²

N/D Site (# students served)	Transition Goal					
	APS Regular School	APS Alternative School	Charter School	GED	Job	Other
Desert Hills School Year Program	25%	0	5%	5%	5%	60% ^a
Desert Hills Summer School	0	0	70%	5%	5%	20% ^a
Juvenile Detention Center	8%	10%	20%	2%		60% ^b
Hogares	5%	0	62%	0	23%	10% ^c

^a Out of district

^b Incarceration, treatment program or out of state

^c TVI/UNM, unknown, out of district, or dropped out

¹² N/D program representative estimates. Sites that have demonstrated the greatest continuity and/or that serve the largest N/D populations are represented in this table.

APS Transition Services

Two APS departments (Special Education and Health/Mental Health) currently provide most of the services that help students transition into APS schools. These services, listed below, focus on special education students, students transitioning into alternative schools & students coming from state correctional facilities.

- APS' Transition Services office facilitates the transitions of special education students, transitions to alternative schools, and transitions from state correctional facilities;
- Three transition specialists serve APS alternative schools;
- School-based social workers are paid mainly to support special education students, but some receive extra funds to provide one hour per day of services to general education students;
- School Health/Mental Health Teams (generally consisting of a school psychologist, counselor, social worker & nurse) provide a range of support services including monitoring & assuring proper schedules;
- Individualized Education Plans and services exist for special education students; and
- An APS psychologist facilitates transitions from state correctional facilities into APS schools.¹³

Barriers to Student Transitions into APS Schools

Upon discharge from N/D facilities, students who wish to transition or return to APS schools confront an array of barriers. The result for many students is lack of educational continuity. Research suggests that the consequences for students, schools and the wider community are grave. As students fall behind their grade level, they are more likely to drop out of school. Students who are not in school are more likely to engage in criminal or other destructive activities, and ultimately they are more likely to populate U.S. jails. The barriers to successful APS transitions, profiled below, emanate both from APS and from N/D institutions.

APS-Based Barriers to Transition

According to key informants, one of the reasons that APS is not a top transition choice for many N/D students is that APS schools present a host of barriers to enrollment and successful integration. Barriers include a lack of services for general education students, bureaucratic resistance to enrolling and supporting N/D students, refusal to accept credits earned at N/D programs, lack of social and therapeutic support services for N/D students, lack of specialized staff, and lack of accountability systems for transition processes and outcomes.

¹³ An APS psychologist is assigned to each of the 2 state correctional facilities – JJD and Springer – to facilitate transitions using a protocol developed through the collaboration between the APS special education transition office, JJD, CYFD and the APS Health/Mental Health department.

Lack of Social and Therapeutic Support Services For N/D Students

Most APS schools lack the resources and support services that N/D students need to reintegrate successfully. A survey of APS high school leaders revealed that students who did not successfully integrate back into APS schools needed the following unavailable or inadequate services: behavior supports, alternative educational programs, social workers, mentoring supports, anger management coaching, substance abuse counseling, mental health supports, vocational rehabilitation services, career or academic counseling, and GED preparation services. Staff from 4 out of 7 responding APS high schools reported inadequate resources to successfully support students returning from correctional facilities and detention centers.¹⁴

In addition, most schools lack strong school-to-careers programs which N/D specialists say are needed for engaging many N/D students. Perhaps most importantly, schools do not provide mentors/advocates or case managers for newly enrolled N/D students unless they have special education status.

Lack of Services for General Education Students

By law, all special education students should receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for services to address academic as well as social, mental health and behavioral needs. According to key informants, this spectrum of services is critical to successfully reintegrating N/D students. However, APS does not have equivalent services to support the transition needs of general education students. Student Assistance Teams (SAT) may review a student's need for support services, 504 accommodations may be recommended for students with disabilities,¹⁵ and an Academic Improvement Plan (AIP) may be created if a student's test scores are low. However SAT and 504 recommendations do not convey additional funding to support the delivery of services. AIPs only address academic needs, not the wider spectrum of issues that constrain N/D student success.

The disparity in services available to special education students compared to general education students exists despite the fact that general education N/D students are far greater in number. General education students are an estimated 55 – 70% of BCJDC's students, 90% of Desert Hills' students, and almost 100% of Hogares students.¹⁶

Lack of Specialized Staff

While some APS schools train teachers in conflict resolution and de-escalation skills, many N/D students leave traditional APS schools complaining that staff didn't understand them or know how to handle them. One charter school representative explained that charter schools and APS alternative schools often are better equipped to serve N/D students because they are smaller and can provide more personalized attention,

¹⁴ Statewide Transition of Youth Offenders Survey of school administrators conducted in March 2003 by the State Transition Coordinating Council. Results compiled and provided by the APS Transition Office.

¹⁵ Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 may support case-by-case assessments of N/D students to identify potential disabilities and create individualized accommodation plans. However APS does not receive extra funds to support 504-recommended services.

¹⁶ Most Hogares students have not been tested for special education eligibility because they have been out of school for so long.

have staff which are experienced in dealing with students with troubled backgrounds, and have the support services that many N/D students need.

Bureaucratic Resistance to Enroll and Support

N/D representatives report that many APS school staffs resist enrolling N/D students in their schools. According to these sources, the reasons schools give for not enrolling N/D students most commonly include:

- It's too late in the semester;
- Student doesn't live within school's attendance boundaries;
- Student doesn't have necessary paperwork (immunization records, transcripts, IEPs, etc.);
- Student has not been disenrolled from his/her previous APS school;
- Proper placement is not possible until documentation of the student's educational history and/or special education status is received;
- Student doesn't have discharge paperwork;
- Student caused trouble at the school when previously enrolled; and
- Student can be enrolled only after proving his/her ability in night classes and Saturday school.

APS H/MH staff report that, once enrolled, teachers and administrators often make it difficult for N/D students to stay in school and succeed. Finally, many schools refuse to accept credits earned at an N/D educational program. N/D representatives worry that students' motivation to continue their education diminishes when credits won't transfer.

No accountability for transition processes or outcomes

According to staff at APS' Transition Office, no person or process at APS is monitoring the transition process or tracking N/D student reintegration and success, largely because these tasks have never been assigned. Many school staff are unaware of the laws that govern N/D transitions and that prohibit the barriers they pose to attempted enrollments. Further, APS does not track the total number of neglected and delinquent students that enroll in APS schools, making it difficult to estimate the scope and severity of N/D student need. Improving the outcomes of N/D students likely requires a person or department explicitly charged to keep APS staff informed and to track and ensure the continuity and quality of N/D student education.

Funding disincentives and accountability pressures

School funding formulas and accountability pressures create disincentives and barriers to serving N/D students. One example is that because funds do not follow students when they transfer schools, APS alternative schools do not have sufficient funding to serve all the N/D students who need their services. Another example is that funding formulas and accountability pressures encourage schools to hold onto N/D students as long as needed to capture 40th day student funding and then to drop N/D students so they will not affect a school's accountability rating. APS may need new policies to support, protect and finance the social and educational needs of neglected and delinquent students. A representative workgroup may be able to develop creative solutions to these and other problems.

N/D Site-Based Barriers to Transition

Barriers to successful transition emanate from N/D institutions as well. They include lack of knowledge about the support services offered at each APS school, failure to include APS staff in placement planning, inconsistent discharge paperwork, inadequate resources devoted to following students after discharge, and weak career readiness programs.

Lack of Information about School Services

N/D sites often lack information that would help them make appropriate school placements. For example, they have lacked information about which APS schools have drug rehabilitation services, braided social workers, and other resources, programs and staff that would support a particular student's successful transition. This gap has been at least partially addressed with a matrix of health and mental health services by school. This matrix was produced in 2005 by APS' H/MH department and brought to the attention of N/D staff at a meeting convened by APS' Title I office and RDA in the fall of 2005.

Failure to Include APS Staff in Placement Planning

Appropriate N/D student placements also are compromised by not including APS school representatives in treatment team meetings prior to a student's release from the N/D facility. According to N/D representatives, this occurs when N/D staff have not identified appropriate APS school contacts or when they simply fail to extend an invitation to attend treatment team meetings.

Inconsistent Discharge Paperwork

Another problem limiting transitions is inconsistent discharge paperwork.¹⁷ Currently each N/D site has its own discharge forms and procedures. Discharge papers are not always written and/or do not always arrive at the student's transition destination. Without complete papers, it is difficult for the receiving institution to create a proper educational plan for the N/D student. Lack of papers also disrupts the enrollment process. Resulting communication problems cause extra work and frustrations for both APS and N/D staff.

Inadequate Resources Devoted to Following Students after Discharge

N/D sites often have little concrete information about the success of a student's placement. Most institutions lack the resources necessary for following students after discharge. Most have no process in place for tracking students, and APS has no system-wide tracking process either.

Weak Career Readiness Programs

Self-admittedly, N/D sites often lack strong career readiness programming that could help students transition successfully to vocational programs and/or jobs.

¹⁷ This problem is largely moot for BCJDC because staff rarely know when or to where students are being released.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

This evaluation identified a number of possibilities for improving APS' N/D Title I program operations, the third purpose of this triennial evaluation. These include establishing an APS workgroup to develop N/D-supportive policies and systems, assigning N/D student tracking and reporting responsibilities to an APS department and functional lead, using state student identification numbers to track students' transition outcomes and academic progress, offering consistent computer-based educational services across N/D sites and APS schools, expanding services for general education students, standardizing discharge papers, publicizing New Mexico record sharing statutes, and disseminating legal information and clear expectations about enrollment to school staff.

Establish an APS workgroup to recommend N/D-supportive policies and systems.

Improving the outcomes of N/D students, which could affect APS school and district accountability ratings, likely requires new APS policies, new funding provisions, and a person or department explicitly charged to track and ensure the continuity and quality of N/D student education. A representative workgroup would be best suited to craft specific recommendations.

Currently, multiple APS departments and schools attempt to address the needs of N/D students, but their efforts are fragmented and poorly funded. The work of APS' Title I office related to N/D students, for example, has been limited to distributing and monitoring the use of a very small amount of supplementary educational funds. An APS workgroup comprised of representatives from the many different entities that serve N/D students may be the best approach to defining problems and developing effective policy solutions.

Important workgroup considerations include how to ensure sufficient funding for N/D services. Title I-Part A money may provide one source of increased funding for N/D student services in both regular public schools and in APS alternative schools. The workgroup also could study APS' Title I Homeless Program as a model for supporting N/D students and helping them stay in school.

Assign responsibility for N/D educational improvement to an APS department and functional lead.

One of the most important first steps APS could take toward improving N/D student services would be to explicitly charge a person and department with responsibility for ensuring the quality and continuity of N/D student education. The duties of this entity could include tracking and reporting enrollment and disenrollment processes and N/D student outcomes. The entity also could spearhead efforts to accomplish other program improvement recommendations recommended in this report (below) and by the proposed N/D workgroup.

State ID numbers: Currently, only one N/D site has access to APS' student information system. Other sites generally do not have APS student identification numbers that would

allow tracking of student transitions and academic progress. In 2004-05, New Mexico's Public Education Department established a state student identification system that reportedly may be accessed by all N/D officials upon registration. APS also could identify state ID numbers for N/D students, provided the N/D site provides full name, date of birth, ethnicity and other information such as previous school. The state ID system could provide a way for N/D sites and APS to track student transitions, academic progress and outcomes.

Expand services for general education students returning to APS schools from N/D institutions: Local experts proposed two options to increase social support services for general education students who are transitioning back into APS schools from N/D facilities. One is to have school Health/Mental Health personnel complete 504s for N/D students. This would give transitioning students an assessment of disabilities that might trigger accommodation plans for support services. At the high school level, another idea is to use schools' relatively new Next Step Plan (NSP) advisory systems to provide students with transition support. This would likely require staff training.

Standardize discharge papers: In order to enroll students promptly and provide them with appropriate education and support services, educational facilities need immediate and complete information about N/D students' backgrounds and prior education. Standardizing discharge paperwork would help achieve both objectives.

Publicize NM record-sharing statutes: National research shows that the success of a student's transfer from an N/D facility to a school often depends on the quick exchange of student records.¹⁸ However, N/D site representatives report that school and agency staff often delay the exchange of student records, citing privacy regulations as a reason. Staff who are responsible for student enrollments need to be informed that NM's State Statutes on Juvenile Interagency Information and Record Sharing explicitly authorizes the sharing of records with health care or mental health professionals, representatives of the protection and advocacy system, and children's safehouse organizations (Chapter 32A-2-32 and Chapter 32A-4-33).

Publicize enrollment policies & procedures: Another barrier to successful transition is the claim that a student cannot be enrolled without immunization records. In fact, the following two factors allow immediate enrollment: (a) students often have shot records on file in APS' student information system, and (b) NM law allows students to enroll without shot records if they have evidence of a scheduled immunization appointment. Well-informed staff may be more likely to heed these allowances.

Support placement planning: In order to facilitate appropriate student placements, N/D staff need to know the resources, programs and services at each educational site. APS' Health/Mental Health department has created a matrix of programs and services by school. Keeping this matrix current, distributing updates annually and posting it on a website with links to N/D and Title I related sites could significantly improve student

¹⁸ JustChildren, Legal Aid Justice Center (November 2004). A Summary of Best Practices in School Reentry for Incarcerated Youth Returning Home.

placements and therefore the effectiveness of student transitions. The H/MH department also could be a resource for N/D sites needing input regarding which school would be most appropriate for a particular student.

Offer consistent computer-based educational services across N/D sites and APS schools. N/D site representatives report that N/D students tend to be highly mobile. An N/D student in one N/D facility often ends up in another, and many students transition back and forth multiple times between N/D facilities and schools. Establishing a consistent computer-based educational program across N/D sites could allow many students to continue their education virtually uninterrupted regardless of their educational location. Many computer-based curricula offer GED and credit-earning potential, and almost all have built-in assessment systems that would facilitate the evaluation of academic effort and outcomes. Currently, the computer-based NovaNet curriculum is used in APS' largest N/D facility and in many APS high schools. Another N/D site uses a computer-based educational program appropriate for middle school students. APS' Title I program may be able to pool resources to expand these computer-based programs to many other institutions, if not all, N/D sites.

FUTURE N/D PROGRAM EVALUATION DESIGN

The fourth purpose of this triennial evaluation is to suggest appropriate scope, measures and methods for future Title I N/D program evaluations.

Both NMPED and APS have acknowledged that federal outcome expectations, as understood and interpreted in 2004-05, were unrealistic given the nature of APS' Title I N/D program activities, the transience of N/D students, and the scarcity of Title I N/D funding. Table 3 shows the outcome data requested by NMPED in 2004-05 in order to fulfill federal evaluation requirements. They include outcomes related to state-mandated assessments,¹⁹ credit earning, graduation, and transitions. These outcomes might logically be expected of focused educational programs with substantial Title I funding and stable enrollments. In contrast, APS' Title I N/D program has the following conditions:

- Most N/D students stay in an N/D facility for such short periods of time that measurable academic progress is hard to achieve. The average length of placement at APS' largest N/D site was 30 days in 2004-05.
- The focus of most N/D sites is on social, emotional and/or behavioral stabilization rather than academic advancement.
- Most of APS' N/D sites have after-school tutoring programs with no established assessment system.
- Eight of the 12 N/D sites received less than \$10,000, and two less than \$3,000, in Title I funds in 2004-05. These amounts are not nearly enough to run intensive or sustained educational programs or to generate measurable academic impacts. Nor is it reasonable to expect that student gains could be attributed to such small amounts of Title I funding.
- Students have a wide range of transition destinations and no system exists for tracking their educational and employment outcomes once they leave an N/D site. APS' entire N/D allocation was \$183,455 in 2004-05. Title I resources are not adequate for establishing and managing complex tracking and reporting systems.
- If the evaluation's cost is to meet generally accepted standards (10% to 15% of the program budget), it may be impossible to conduct a meaningful evaluation of federally required student outcomes such as post-secondary placement.

Table 3 shows that very few of APS' N/D sites were able to provide data for federally required outcome indicators in 2004-05. The largest number of sites reporting on any one of the outcome indicators was 4 out of a total of 12 sites. Only 2 out of the 12 N/D sites were able to provide most of the requested outcome data.

¹⁹ Federal law requires reporting of performance on state-mandated assessments only for students residing at a facility for 90 days or longer, which represented only 12% of Albuquerque's N/D students in 2004-05.

Table 3. Requested Outcome Data & Number of N/D Sites Providing Data for Each Indicator, 2004-05.

Federally Required Outcome Indicators	Number of Sites Reporting Data
Gains on Site-Based Assessments	3
Improvement on State-Mandated Assessments (NMSBA)	0
Earned School Credit	3
Graduated or Earned GED	4
Transitioned to Other Educational Program	2
Obtained Employment or Enrolled in Post-Secondary Education or Military	2

The federal requirement to report testing outcomes only for students who receive Title I services for 90 days or more appears to support a more focused evaluation strategy. However, as of March 2006, the U.S. Department of Education had not created similarly clear parameters for the other outcome measures. New Mexico’s Public Education Department therefore continued to require reporting of credit earning, graduation and other outcomes for all N/D students.

The purpose and design of future evaluations will depend on the evolution of APS policies, programs and practices related to N/D students. Currently, N/D student transience, low funding levels and fragmented programming prescribe a formative rather than summative evaluation focus. In other words, the most productive use of evaluation under current conditions is to inform the development of APS’ Title I N/D student program as well as of APS policies and practices that support N/D student success. Once these policies, programs and practices are operating, and once a system for tracking N/D students is established, an evaluation of student outcomes may be possible and productive.

One short-term strategy for evaluating the academic outcomes of Title I services for N/D students would be to focus on students who receive consistent Title I education-related services for significant amounts of time (e.g., 90 or more continuous days). If state student identification numbers can be identified for all N/D students receiving Title I services, RDA may be able to use APS’ student information system to track the academic progress of students who transition from N/D sites to APS schools. Available outcome indicators likely would include earned school credit, achievement on state and district mandated assessments, graduation, and post-secondary plans. APS does not currently evaluate the post-secondary outcomes of graduating students, so those federally required indicators may not be available.

Whatever evaluation strategy is selected, evaluators should consider how to make its cost proportionate to the program budget. In addition, the evaluation design should result from an honest appraisal of the program’s potential impact. As one evaluation expert puts it, “the evaluator analyzes the likelihood that the program can conceivably have good

enough effects to be worth formal (and expensive) study.”²⁰ The total Title I allocation to neglected and delinquent sites in 2006-07 will be \$148,050. This amount of program funding may justify program monitoring and formative evaluation services. However, the amount of Title I N/D funding and the transient nature of N/D students may make it hard to justify costly longitudinal evaluation studies of the program’s effects on student achievement and post-secondary outcomes. These same constraints impede the evaluator’s ability to draw causal links between Title I program services and N/D student outcomes.

²⁰ Weiss, Carol H. (1998). *Evaluation*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p 73.

CONCLUSIONS

This triennial Title I N/D program evaluation has four purposes: (1) to describe N/D program services; (2) to describe current transition processes, strengths and weaknesses; (3) to identify opportunities for N/D policy & program improvement; and (4) to suggest appropriate scope, measures & methods for future evaluations. Results are summarized by purpose below.

N/D Program Services

APS' use of Title I funds complies with federal law and state mandates. However, the amount of Title I funding available for N/D sites and the characteristics of N/D students have limited the intensity, duration and scope of educational services. In 2004-05, twelve N/D sites received a total of \$183,455 and served a total of 1,850 students. Seven of the N/D sites received less than \$10,000 and one received only \$1,130. Two sites provided comprehensive educational services, while the majority provided after-school tutoring or other supplemental educational services. The N/D student population is highly transient, averaging only 41 continuous days at any one N/D site.

Current Transition Processes, Strengths and Weaknesses

Federal law emphasizes the importance of using Title I – Part D funds to facilitate successful transitions from N/D facilities to students' home schools. One of the key findings of this study is that a relatively small proportion of N/D students have APS as a transition destination. Most N/D students who stay in Albuquerque and do not end up in a correctional facility require environments that traditional APS schools cannot provide, for example, small enrollments, low pupil-teacher ratios, and staff who are highly skilled in working with troubled students. Currently, charter schools and APS alternative schools are most likely to offer these conditions.

Opportunities for N/D Policy & Program Improvement

For N/D students who do wish to transition to an APS school, a number of modifications in APS procedures and services would help improve transition outcomes. First would be to increase the speed with which N/D students are enrolled at APS schools. This could be accomplished in some cases by making sure that school staffs are aware of laws and policies that prohibit common delays. Explicitly charging a person and department with responsibility for tracking and reporting enrollment processes also might enhance accountability and student outcomes.

Another strategy would be for N/D sites to use the H/MH matrix of support services by school to select the appropriate APS school for each N/D student. APS H/MH staff also could do 504 assessments for each N/D student to identify any disabilities that require special accommodations. At the high school level, Next Step Plan advisors could attend to the N/D student's transition needs.

N/D sites could improve transition outcomes by consistently involving APS staff in placement planning, by standardizing discharge paperwork, by making sure that complete

student papers arrive at transition destinations, and by enhancing the quality of their career readiness programs.

This evaluation also identified one promising alternative for improving Title I educational services while students are at N/D sites: pooling Title I resources to offer consistent computer-based educational services, such as NovaNet, across N/D sites and APS schools. This would allow highly mobile students to continue their education from one site to another and earn credits and/or complete their GED. Preliminary investigations by the APS Title I office has indicated that, although this option may not be possible for every N/D site, it is realistic for the sites that serve the largest proportions of N/D students.

Recommendations for Future N/D Evaluations

APS' use of Title I N/D program funds complies with federal law and state mandates. Nevertheless, APS' current Title I N/D program is poorly funded and relatively fragmented (consisting of 12 separate programs in 12 different institutions). Most N/D students receive Title I services for short periods of time, and their transition outcomes upon discharge often are unknown. Further, the focus of Title I services often is social, emotional or behavioral rather than academic. For these reasons among others, many of the outcomes anticipated in federal law are not realistic for APS' Title I N/D program.

The conditions summarized above signal opportunities for Title I N/D program enhancement, APS policy development and the creation of information management systems for N/D students. A formative evaluation focus would allow the next triennial evaluation of APS' Title I program for N/D students to document reforms and perceptions of effectiveness. Paired with a system for tracking N/D students, therefore, continued formative evaluation could help APS develop sound N/D student policies and practices.

Additionally, the next triennial evaluation could include an outcome study of students who receive consistent Title I education-related services for significant amounts of time (e.g., 90 or more continuous days) and then transition to APS schools. If state student identification numbers can be established for all N/D students receiving Title I services, RDA may be able to use APS' student information system to track the progress of students who transition from N/D sites to APS schools.

APPENDIX A

APS N/D Sites, Title I Program Descriptions, Allocations, Numbers of Students Served and Average Length of Stay, 2004-05.

Site	Student Profile	Educational Services	Title I Funding Allocation	Number Students Served	Average Length of Stay*
Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center (APS)	Incarcerated & awaiting adjudication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited APS school • Standards-based general and special education math & reading curriculum • Alternative Language Services • GED preparation 	\$56,000	967	30 days
Presbyterian Behavioral Health ²¹	Youth aged 4 – 17 experiencing acute crisis or mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring for students who stay longer than 10 days 	\$1,695	364	7 days
Desert Hills Treatment Center	Substance abuse Severe emotional problems Sexual behavior issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8-week program • Access 21st Century computer-based education program • Direct instruction • Summer School • North Central accredited – awards high school credits 	\$46,330	240	68 days
Hogares, Inc.	Youth aged 3 – 18 who have experienced trauma and/or are mentally ill, abuse substances or have engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-school tutoring • 6-week summer school • GED preparation 	\$35,595	130	72 days
All Faiths Receiving Home ²²	Abused and/or neglected children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-school tutoring • Coordination with home schools 	\$6,780	55	80 days
A New Day Youth & Family Services	Displaced, at-risk youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-school tutoring 	\$7,345	31	49 days

²¹ Did not qualify for Title I funding in 2005-06 or 2006-07 because students do not stay 30 days or longer.

²² Discontinued services in the spring of 2006.

Site	Student Profile	Educational Services	Title I Funding Allocation	Number Students Served	Average Length of Stay*
Villa Santa Maria	Severe emotional difficulty & at-risk for dropout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards based instruction by Special Ed certified teachers North Central accredited – awards high school credits 	\$8,475	18	360 days
Life Options Academy ²³	High risk teen mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent education GED preparation Literacy & educational support 	\$5,600	13	112 days
Albuquerque Christian Children's Home	Abused & neglected children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After-school tutoring in math, reading & critical thinking skills 	\$6,215	23	360 days
Albuquerque Boys Reintegration Center ²⁴	Male criminal offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After-school tutoring Instruction in reading & math 	\$4,900	8	114 days
Amistad Crisis Shelter	Runaway, homeless & neglected youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After-school tutoring 	\$1,130	NA	NA

* Average Length of Stay between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005.

²³ Started 2004-05 as “Albuquerque Girls Reintegration Center.”

²⁴ Recognized as a state educational agency (SEA) – affiliated Title I program in 2005-06, rather than an LEA (APS) Title I responsibility.