ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR CONNECTICUT YOUTH INVOLVED IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Executive Summary:

This project critically examines the importance of school credit acquisition, reentry practices and the impact of laws nationally and locally to improve the predicament that youth in juvenile justice often face. Particularly, the review here considers the impact of State of Connecticut, PA No. 21-174 passed in 2021. Youth who have been part of the juvenile justice system often are disconnected from school or have a tenuous attachment to school prior to entry into the juvenile justice system (Farn & Adams, 2016; Gonzalez, Etow & De La Vega, 2019). A positive transition back to community school is a strong predictor of low recidivism (Blomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012). School connection and successful attainment of a high school credential is essential for future success as a young adult (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014). Youth in Connecticut (CT) who have been involved in the Juvenile Justice system will now have access to a transitional counselor for re-entry support and school systems are required to translate report cards and award partial credits with the passing of Public Act No. 21-174. This act creates one state entity responsible for the oversight and coordination of the education for youth in care under the Department of Children and Families (DCF). This legislation was created and proposed through the efforts of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. The DCF, however, does not control policy and procedure, expectations, or oversight of compliance of education for CT schools. The State Department of Education sets regulations, policy, procedure, data collection and oversight for CT school districts. Statutes, policy, and procedure can dictate expectations but the implementation at the local level is where true change may and should occur. The attitudes and behaviors of staff will either make the initiatives and changes successful or not.

This project critically examines the importance of school credit acquisition, reentry practices and the impact of laws nationally and locally to improve the predicament that youth in juvenile justice often face. Particularly, the review here considers the impact of State of Connecticut, PA No. 21-174 passed in 2021. School is a strong protective factor for youth(McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). Youth who have been part of the juvenile justice system often are disconnected from school or have a tenuous attachment to school prior to entry into the juvenile justice system (Farn & Adams, 2016; Gonzalez, Etow & De La Vega, 2019). A positive transition back to community school is a strong predictor of low recidivism (Blomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012). School connection and successful attainment of a high school credential is necessary for future success as a young adult (Irby & Mawhinney, 2014). Youth in Connecticut who have been involved in the Juvenile Justice system will now have access to a transitional counselor for re-entry support and school systems are required to translate report cards and award partial credits with the passing of Public Act No. 21-174. This act creates one state entity responsible for the oversight and coordination of the education for youth in care under the Department of Children and Families (DCF). This legislation was created and proposed through the efforts of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). The Department of Children and Families, however, does not control policy and procedure, expectations, or oversight of compliance with education for Connecticut schools. The State Department of Education sets most regulations, policy, procedure, data collection and oversight for CT school districts.

Prevalence Promising Trends National and in Connecticut

Youth who are involved with juvenile justice are much more likely to become what has been termed opportunity youth or youth who are 18 to 24 years old and have not completed a high

school credential, are not enrolled in school, or gainfully employed (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, K, 2018; Henderson, & Baffour, 2015). The percentage of youth who are incarcerated has diminished from 2006 to 2015 by 50% according to the PEW Trust (2017). Connecticut has had an 83% reduction in the same period (PEW Trust, 2017). National statistics found on Youth.gov reports that the United States processes over 1.7 million youth cases annually; minority youth continue to be more likely to be held upon arrest. African Americans are 16% of overall youth in the US (United States) but are 30% of youth who are incarcerated. African Americans are also 38% of youth in residential placement and 58% of the youth who are moved to the adult prison system. Youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system are 3 to 7 times more likely to be students with identified special needs depending which state is reviewed nationally (Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2019; Youth.gov, 2021).

In Connecticut (CT), the reduction of youth involved in juvenile justice system continued to decrease from 2006 to 2019 by 63% for all races but the proportion of youth incarcerated remains disproportionate with youth admitted in 2015, 79% of color and in 2019, 84% of color (C. Marcellin and S. Harvell, 2020). In 2019, the population of youth incarcerated who were black was 43% yet the population of black youth in CT in 2018 between the ages of 12-20 was only 12%. Similarly, the percentage of youth identifying as Hispanic youth is 40% in judicial yet only 21 percent of youth in CT in 2018 are identified as Hispanic. In CT, in 2018 61% of youth are identified as white but only 16% of youth in judicial system in 2019 are white (C. Marcellin and S. Harvell, 2020).

There is encouraging news for youth in the continued drop of young people moved from the juvenile judicial system to the adult system from 2006 to 2019 of 94%. Most youth in custody, over 70%, are being held and are unsentenced (C. Marcellin & S. Harvell, 2020).

Many youths who are involved in the judicial system are also considered cross over youth or youth involved previously with the Department of Children and Families (DCF, DMC strategies, 2015). The investigation into crossover youth and accurate data analysis is difficult due to laws protecting confidentiality which inhibit matching data sets but with much effort an analysis was completed through Court Support Services and Court Operations Divisions and DCF through grant support and the University of Connecticut's Center for Applied Research and Development Center, for youth born between 1996 and 2002, the data set included youth between ages 10 and 16 involved with one open case in judicial system. This analysis found 4,909 crossover youth and admits the number would be much higher if the ages analyzed went further to include youth to the age of 22 (DCF, DMC strategies, 2015).

The percentage of children in care through DCF has diminished from 2000 to 2015 by 45% (DCF, Data Reports, 2016). There has been a significant effort by CT DCF to offer services to maintain families and offer care and services to improve family conditions and not remove and place children. Despite these efforts, virtually 5,000 youth were identified as crossover youth who had open cases for abuse and neglect in their lifetime and then became youth involved in the judicial system. The other stressor that may be involved in these young people's lives is homelessness (Cutuli et al., 2013). The percentage of youth who experienced homelessness is unknown but surmised to be quite high through anecdotal and interview data; this data is difficult to collect (Mendelson, Mmari, Blum, Catalano, & Brindis, 2018). CT and nationally there are few homeless shelters for youth compared to adult shelters. Many more homeless people and youth are living in other types of situations such as being doubled up or "couch surfing"(Cutuli et al., 2013). The federal data base on homeless youth reports a drop from 2017-18 of 1,508,265 to 2018-19 of 1,387,573 and in CT from 5,015 in 2017-18 to 4,722 in 2018-19 (Burd-Sharps &

Lewis, K., 2018; Homelessness, 2021). These statistics are taken from a point in time and reflect the numbers during the data collection window across the nation and by state. Young men are more at risk of homelessness than young women according to the same data analysis. Experiencing homelessness effects educational proficiency and increases the likelihood of dropping out of school(Cutuli et al., 2013).

Dropout rates, according to the Office of Civil Rights and the US Department of Education, have declined from 14.1% rate in 1977 to 5.8% rate in 2017 (McFarland, J., Cui, J., Holmes, J., and Wang, X.,2019). This same data analysis states the dropout rate is higher among black and Hispanic males than white males between the ages of 16-24 years old. Those with economic disadvantage have an Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate of 78% versus a US average of 85%. The graduation rate for the adjusted cohort of limited English Language Proficiency is 66% and for students with disabilities it is 67% all lower than the national overall average (Stanford & Muhammad, 2018).

In Connecticut, most of the students incarcerated are male and have special education plans (Marcellin & Harvell, 2020; OCA-Report-MYIYCI-Nov-2020). In School year 17/18, 76 % of students under 18 and incarcerated had special education needs. In school year 18/19, 88% had special education plans who were in the Region 1 school district which serves youth who are incarcerated. In the school year, 19/20 despite a slowdown in the judicial system due to COVID19, 74% of the youth incarcerated had special education plans (Region 1 report to JJPOC, 2021; MYI Response to OCA, 2021). Adding to this disparity, most young people arrested and sent to juvenile detention are students of color; the data reflects that this is an equity issue (Gonzalez, et al, 2019; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier & Valentine, 2009).

Risk and Protective Factors

There are many common risk factors among youth who experience homelessness or who become involved with the Department of Children and Families or are in the care of the juvenile justice system. Many of the risk factors that these youth experience are remarkably similar to the risk factors that lead other youth to contemplate self-harm or suicide (Cutuli et al., 2013; Porche, Costello, & Rosen-Reynoso, 2016; Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris & Jones, 1998). The risk factors include bullying at school, substance use, alcohol use, being a victim of community or home-based violence including harsh discipline and rejection (Forge, Hartinger-Saunders, Wright, & Ruel, 2018; Hong, Peguero, & Espelage, 2018; Kolbe, Kann, & Collins, 1993; Resnick et al., 1998; Werbart Törnblom, Sorjonen, Runeson, & Rydelius, 2020). Many youths prior to involvement in the systems of DCF or juvenile justice or becoming homeless have experienced a traumatic event or a series of what would qualify as Adverse Child Experiences on the Adverse Child Experiences Scale (ACES) (Cooper, 1998; Forge et al., 2018; Rooney, Hill, Oosterhoff, & Kaplow, 2019; Yildiz, Demirhan, & Gurbuz, 2019; Porche, 2016). There is a body of research considering prevention efforts and how to detect and assist youth who are at-risk of becoming involved in juvenile justice or DCF (Goldkind, 2014; Nelson, Jolivette, Leone, & Mathur, 2010; Mercy & Vivolo-Kantor,2016; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Similar once again to students who become violent towards themselves and lose hope, adolescents who become involved in juvenile justice have similar predisposing difficulties (Jones, Ferguson, Ramirez & Owens, 2018). These difficulties include environmental, familial adversity, as well as peer conflicts or rejections which impact their view of the world and sense of safety, hope and worth (Kingston, Bacallao, Smokowski, Sullivan & Sutherland, 2016; Porche, 2016). The violence in neighborhoods and homes, poverty and lack of supports erodes youth's ability to think positively about their own future (Furlong, Morrison, Austin, Huh-Kim,

& Skager, 2001; Jewett et al., 2021; Khubchandani & Price, 2018; MacDonald, Piquero, Valois, & Zullig, 2005). This sense of being unsafe in school and in the community on the way to school leads youth to carry weapons for their own protection which violates school policies which can lead to arrest and involvement in the juvenile justice system (Belanger et al., 2020; Fields & Abrams, 2010; Furlong et al., 2001; Jewett et al., 2021; Khubchandani & Price, 2018; Robertson & Walker, 2018) Instilling hope, a sense of safety and belonging are necessary for improved outcomes.

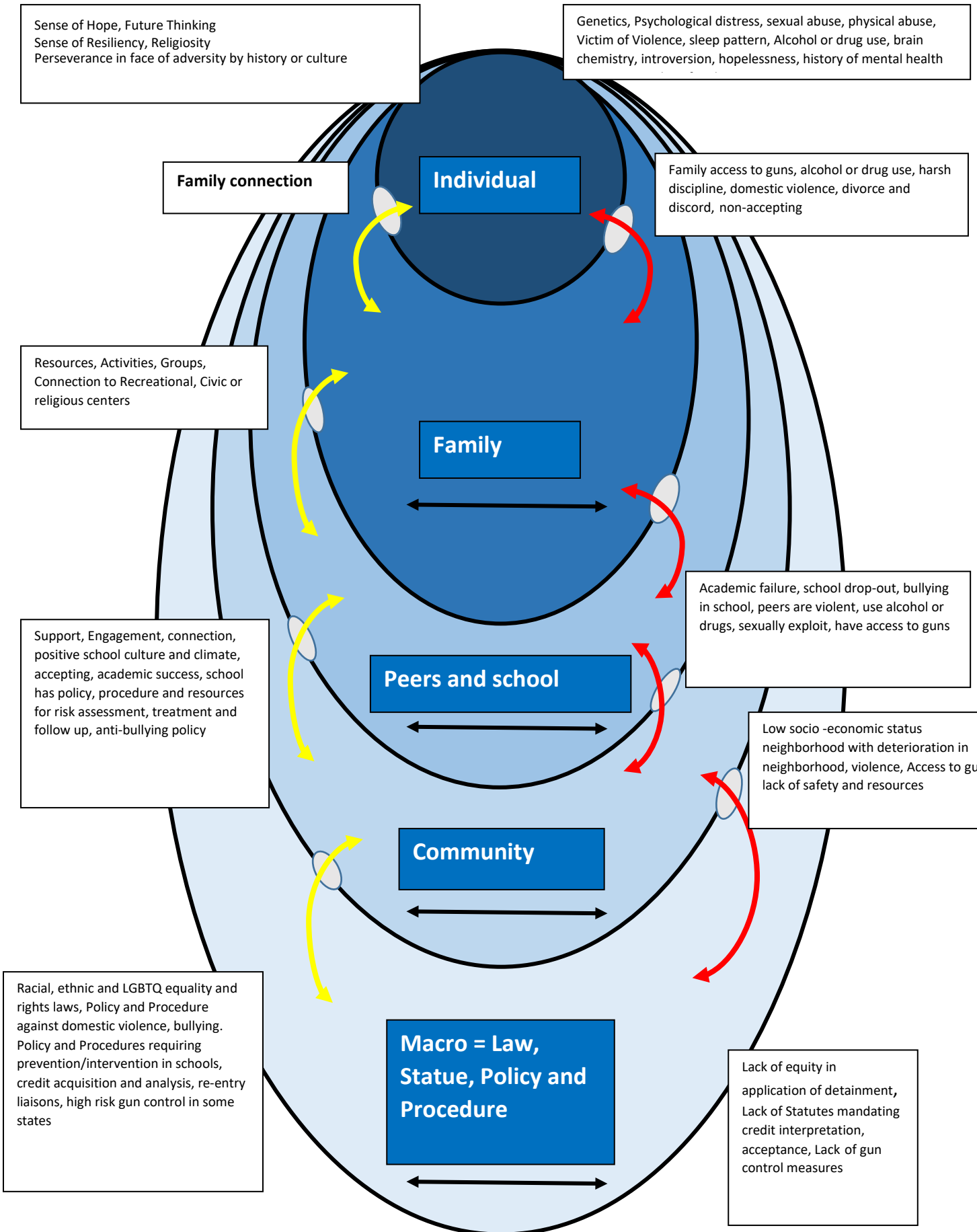
Protective or mitigating factors that can ameliorate the conditions of at-risk youth are reviewed in the data analysis of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study which is an ongoing longitudinal study with the Center for Disease Control (CDC WONDER online Database, 2020; Kegler, Dahlberg, & Mercy, 2018; Kolbe et al., 1993). A community having resources and activities that are accepting of differing youth and therefore increasing a sense of belonging are factors that can increase or mitigate risk depending on availability and quality (Poteat, et al, 2019; Stein, et al, 2010). Youth connection to community is a protective factor as is a sense of religiosity (Goldston, et al, 2008; Kann, L., 2018; King et al, 2019; Walker et al, 2014). Youth feeling empowered, heard by encouraging adults, mentors and increasing civic engagement can be protective if available (Eisman et al, 2015; Matlin, et al, 2011; Mendelson, 2018; Wagaman, A. 2016).

Family can be both a protective and risk provoking entity in an adolescent's life (Chung-Do et al, 2015; Eisman, et al 2015; Forge et al, 2018; Greene et al, 2015; Griffith-Jackson, S, 2013; Gutierrez, P and S. Osman, 2008). The single best protective factor is a close connection with an adult which could be a family, school, or community member (Hatchel et al, 2018; Eisman, et al, 2015; Sharaf et al, 2009; Stappert, K., 2017). A consistent family that a

youth can count on is a protective factor in their life (Resnick, et al, 1997). A family that has many risk factors may not be protective and increase the youth's potential risk for suicide, homicide or an episode leading to arrest and incarceration. Some families have alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence or are abusive to their children using harsh discipline or are neglectful or disinterested in each other adding to risk. If a family has divorce, domestic violence or constant arguing and dissention this can increase risk (Resnick et al, 1997; Werbert et al; 2020). Individually youth are at heightened risk if they have been sexually abused, been a victim of violence, use alcohol or drugs or been involved in the legal system or youth protective system (Resnick, et al, 1997). Youth who are from families with mental illness, drug abuse, alcoholism or a history of family members being incarcerated are at greater risk of being involved with DCF or juvenile justice system (Cavendish, 2014; Eisman, et al, 2015).

Protective factors at an individual level include a sense of resiliency and future thinking (Belanger et al., 2020; Rose, Lindsey, Xiao, Finnigan-Carr & Joe, 2017; Xiao & Lu, 2019). This future thinking may be connected to a sense of religiosity or perseverance in the face of adversity learned culturally based on history (Rose et al, 2017). Black youth seem to have a better ability to cope in the face of adversity and some studies attribute this ability to having learned this from surviving and thriving despite long term disparity and injustice (Rose et al, 2017). This better ability to cope seems to protect black youth better from suicide and self-harm but does not protect them from arrest and involvement with child protective services and/or juvenile justice system. Black youth are disproportionally the greatest population in secured settings (Kubek, Tindall-Biggins, Reed, Carr, & Fenning, 2020).

Conceptual Framework



School could be considered a part of the community section of a conceptual framework; however, it is also where most youth spend a great part of their day and interact with peers. Peers are an extremely important part of an adolescent's life. Choice in friends influences a young person's decisions and access to varying opportunities both positive and negative towards one's development (Resnick, et al, 1997; Werbart, et al, 2020). The peer group can offer support and encouragement and mitigate risks or can add to risk factors (Resnick, et al, 1997; Werbart, et al, 2020). Peers could be involved with violence, alcohol, drug abuse which increases risks or could be involved with prosocial activities and community awareness and enhancements therefore deceasing risks (Resnick, et al, 1997; Werbart, et al, 2020). School is where most youth find each other and begin friendships and connections or is where they could feel ostracized, persecuted, and humiliated (Kann, L. 2018 ;Clark & Unruh, 2010; Kubek et al., 2020; Unruh, Waintrup, Alverson, Erickson, & MaGee, 2021)). Connection to school and good academic performance are correlated with less risk and seen as protective factors (Resnick, et al, 1997; Rose, et al, 2017; Robertson & Walker, 2018).

Schools who have strong policy, procedures and resources for positive youth development, positive school culture and climate, quick risk assessment and follow up resources are protective in youths' lives (Clark & Unruh, 2010; Griller Clark & Mathur, 2021; Hoover, Sapere, Lang, Nadeem, Dean & Vona, 2018; Kubek et al., 2020; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014; Unruh et al., 2021). Urban and suburban schools have more resources and have been better able to a have a comprehensive approach to developing and fostering an accepting school community and a responsive school community to youth needs and risks compared to rural areas (Kegler, et al, 2018). Some studies discuss how the surrounding community environment effects the school

board and what a school can provide and how accepting a school community will be to ethnically diverse, immigrant or LGBT youth (Madsen, Damsgaard, Rubin, Jerveland, Lasgaard & Walsh, 2016). A student who is bullied, violated, isolated in school and/or drops out of school is much more at risk (Furlong et al., 2001; Jewett et al., 2021; Robertson & Walker, 2018; Semprevivo, Agnich, & Peguero, 2020).

Literature Review on School Reentry Best Practices

A literature search was conducted using Catalyst, PubMed, and Google Scholar for information from 2000 to 2020 regarding re-entry protocols for Opportunity Youth, Youth, Young Adults, Emerging Adults from Incarceration, Juvenile Detention, Adult Corrections to community and school in the United States.

There were very few research studies completed and those that were completed had very low "n" except for a few who utilized the Longitudinal Adolescent Risk Survey data. Included are two reports completed specifically in Connecticut regarding "Opportunity Youth" and how to re-engage our youth with various educational options within the public school system and look at some best practices that have met with success in New York City completed for the Dalio Foundation. The other report was completed by the Office of the Child Advocate in Connecticut specifically reviewing the educational conditions in Juvenile Detention Centers and Region 1 or the educational district for corrections in CT.

Several articles reviewed the changes in the law on the federal level and its potential for impact on improving incentives and funding for programs that assist youth who have been involved in the corrections system to re-engage and complete their high school credential (Darden, 2016; Koster, 2019; Laub, 2018; Migden, 2017) Some of these articles explored how to use the law to

push the system legally to enhance efforts to educate and rehabilitate youth rather than punish. In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act specifically had a section in it for Opportunity Youth who may have disengaged due to incarceration and needed to have diverse types of education, mentoring and technical skill development to become gainfully employed (Lockwood & Nally, 2017). This money is then referenced in the Dalio foundation report on improving opportunities for" Opportunity Youth" (Parthenon-EY, 2016).

Numerous articles reviewed discussed the plight of incarcerated youth and the common stressors that many had in common prior to incarceration which left them with little in positive social networking for re-entry into the community and school (Blomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012; Gilad, Gutman, & Chawaga, 2019; Goldkind, 2014b; Grigorenko, Hart, Hein, Kovalenko, & Naumova, 2019; Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012; House, Toste, & Austin, 2018; Laub, 2018; McDermott, Anderson, & Zaff, 2017; Moore, McArthur, & Saunders, 2013; Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2015; Nordin & Nordin, 2018; Ruch & Yoder, 2018). Those that had family often had family that were not able to be positive role models or assist in advocating for their relative. The articles referred to the larger percentage of youth who are black than white and the over 80% who have special education needs and are labeled with having both learning and emotional disabilities. Many youths have family who were incarcerated, are part of the foster family system and have had many disrupted educational situations due to multiple moves (Cutuli,2013; Porche, 2016). The young adults in the Moore (2013) article, discuss their needs upon transition but this is in Australia, however it seems to dovetail nicely with the statements of youth in the United States highlighted in the McDermott article (2017). What adds to the risk of dropout and what adds to resiliency?

Two studies used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth as their statistics and what are the mitigating factors that can lower recidivism and predict a better outcome for youth who have been involved in the justice system (Brown, 2015; Nichols et al., 2015). Brown discusses the beneficial impact of obtaining some college classes and the greater impact of completing a college degree on lowering recidivism. He states that the GED completion does not have a beneficial impact. Nichols, et al, that the positive factors are school connectedness and having a mentor or adult who can assist with making the connections occur back to school and other available resources for the young person.

Numerous articles based on the data for recidivism and precipitating factors leading to a stay in some form of detention or incarceration discussed what is needed to create a positive transition back to the community (Blomberg et al., 2012; Goldkind, 2014; Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012; Hogan, Bullock, & Fritsch, 2010; House et al., 2018; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014; McDermott et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2013; Pace, 2018). Young adults and adolescents need individualized plans since no one plan can address the unique needs of each person. They would all benefit from a transition process that begins at least three months prior to expected release with relevant community providers present at the meetings and starting connections and processing for entry prior to actual release. Preferably the re-entry would include a mentor or designated staff person from an agency who would assist and ensure connections and forms are completed for the actual start in the most needed programs such as school, housing, and vocational programming. All speak to the need for states to create legislation that allows for partial credits to be accepted by each school and for quick response time to transcript requests so youth do not repeat classes they have already passed and can get all credits they have acquired on a composite transcript towards a high school credential. Interagency agreements or MOUs (memorandums of understanding)

need to be formalized prior to young people arriving and requiring coordinated efforts and supports from the providers. These agreements or MOUs break down barriers to coordinated care. Mental health services and continuing educational supports through IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) are vital to success for many youths who have concerns over experienced trauma, neglect, abuse, substance abuse issues and for many witnessing crimes and domestic violence.

Research and statistics on emerging adults who find themselves in the adult correction system is lacking. The young people under age 22 have the right to an education and, according to IDEA, have the right to transition planning, vocational planning, and educational supports. Young adults while in process and before commitment to adult corrections are not part of the Region 1 educational system in CT and are often being held in adult jail without access to education. Once home and awaiting trial they are often being expelled from regular school and many are not seeing school as a priority during this time; this adds to the school disconnection and the lapse in education (Blomberg et al., 2012; Cavendish, 2014; Hogan, Bullock, & Fritsch, 2010). This makes it more difficult to eventually reconnect and complete a high school diploma which research confirms is vital towards establishing a path to success and reducing recidivism.

Improving School as Prevention, Intervention

Given that schools are a strong protective factor and the lack of connection to school is a strong risk factor for possible self-harm, violence and involvement with juvenile justice, the need to foster school connection is paramount in prevention and in successful re-entry for juveniles involved in juvenile justice and detained. Many youths find success academically while incarcerated or detained in a secured facility (Cavendish, 2014). For some youth this is the first time they have had consistency, routine and had all the basic needs attended to in their lives,

medical, dental, mental health, nutritional and educational (Blomberg et al., 2012; Cavendish, 2014; Karger & Currie-Rubin, 2013; Ohara, Matsuura, Hagiuda, & Wakasugi, 2020). The National Juvenile Justice Network has issued parameters regarding successful reentry practices including multiple stakeholders and starting the plan for reentry when the young person first enters the system. Education is a key component according to the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the US Department of Education for the improvement of the trajectory of young persons' life who has interface with juvenile justice. The US Department of Education facilitated a summit on the education of youth in juvenile justice and the difficulties with reentry in November of 2012. This summit highlighted the need to improve educational opportunities in juvenile and adult corrections facilities for young people and to improve the collaboration for effective reentry planning to the community and school. The National Department of Education and Department of Justice together issued in 2014 guiding principles to improve the education of youth in juvenile justice systems (Gonsoulin, Griller Clark & Rankin, 2015). Two of the guiding principles numbers 4 and 5 were utilized by the CT JJPOC in developing the proposed and now approved statute to improve the quality of education in the CT system, principal 4 suggests one entity for oversight and coordination, enhancing education within the system and principal 5 suggests using legislation and statutes to improve system collaboration and procedures using statutes and memorandums of understanding to ensure proper procedures for reentry and educational information sharing.

In CT, a study was completed by Yale in 2010 stating similar needs and concerns regarding the state of education within detention and correctional facilities and the paucity of services for reentry and successful reentry protocols (Macomber et al., 2010). The CT correctional facilities educational programs need updating to include technology and skills youth would be expected to

know when reentering the community and schools. Manson Youth Correctional facility has yet, in 2020, to have any technology based educational opportunities for youth. The remaining two detention centers in CT in 2021 have disparate resources. Bridgeport Detention is run by Bridgeport school district and does not have access to any typical school technology such as laptops, smart boards, and credit recovery programs online formats but Hartford Detention run by DOMUS Kids for Hartford public schools does have these capabilities with the use of Title 1 Part D funds through the 2001, No Child Left Behind Act, and the tenacity of staff working with the state to create firewalls meeting every system involved specifications (OCA report, 2020). This is but one example of the disparity and inequity within the juvenile system regarding educational programming and availability (Macomber et al., 2010).

Legislation Brief Overview Impacting Education

A more distal factor affecting youth and the discrepancy in opportunity is our national and state policies and attitudes about youth in distress. Originally, juvenile justice systems were commenced by citizens realizing youth were not simply little adults but had differing developmental needs and abilities (Landess, 2016). A separate system was established in the courts for youth with rehabilitation ideals rather than punishment (Landess, 2016). Later with events occurring in society and schools with youth carrying weapons to school, society and education created the "Zero Tolerance Policies" (Redfield & Nance, 2016). The application of these policies blanketly to all who violated regardless of circumstances led to a backlash in society and outcry regarding the unreasonableness with exemplars making the news (Redfield & Nance, 2016). The school to prison pipeline was a phenomenon created by policy, procedure and laws leading to students being arrested in schools (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Some of the arrests were for status offenses, meaning offenses considered illegal simply because of the age of

the offender such as truancy (Landess, 2016; Redfield & Nance, 2016). The rights of youth in the court system have not been the same as adults and at times this was a protective factor in history separating children from adults in custody and thinking about rehabilitation for youth rather than punishment. However, the separate system for youth led to different due process rights, or lack thereof, and has meant some young people could spend years detained without charges being reviewed and proven in a court of law (Landess, 2016; Redfield & Nance, 2016). Society's concerns and beliefs have affected the perceptions of youth offenders and their treatment throughout history. There have been moments such as in the 1980s where the idea of some youth being "super predators" changed how some juvenile offenders were sentenced or held (Landess, 2016). Court decisions after this and statistics proved this concept was false and gave back some protections to youth and again making it more difficult to move young people to the adult criminal system. Youth can, in many states, be detained for status offenses such as truancy, running away, consuming alcohol which are illegal simply due to age. They can be held if a court stipulated the youth needed to refrain from an activity or attend an activity and violated this court order. These violations can cause a youth to be remanded to detention (Landess, 2016). This system increased the possibility of youth in distress being incarcerated, disrupting their education and the possibility of completing their high school credential (Redfield & Nance, 2016). The nation, in 1974, recognized this inequity and its potential abuse in various jurisdictions and established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The OJJDP encouraged states to improve their system, laws and statutes and prevent youth from being incarcerated for status offenses with incentive and contingency funds (Landess, 2016; Redfield & Nance, 2016). In CT, these funds led to Juvenile Review Boards, in most towns, to review first time offenses and offer community restorative solutions for misdemeanors. Statutes

were amended within the last five years in CT leading to the Youth Service Bureaus being used as the entity for referring youth for services rather than to court for violations which in the past were labeled as Family with Service Need Petitions. These petitions were often used for truancy from school, running away from home or refusing to abide by the families' rules or being an "out of control" youth. These status offenses no longer are presented in juvenile court in CT, and this has reduced the amount of youth in detention facilities (CYSA, 2020).

Federal Laws have impacted youth who are involved in multiple systems some with benefit and some with unintended detriment. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA, 1974 and last updated in 2002, protects privacy and educational records but impedes the transfer of educational records in a timely manner from one system to another. This led to lack of transcript information and an inability to properly place and track the educational progress of youth who had multiple systemic involvement or abrupt community moves. Delay in the acquisition and transfer of documents has led to delays in registration, planning and a lack of proper service delivery for educational success. Most recently the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act (FCSIAA) of 2008 included a component to ensure the transfer of records within two business days. Some laws initially had exclusions for youth who were involved in juvenile justice such as the FCSIAA of 2008. It was amended in April of 2014 to include crossover youth. Prior to the amendment resources available to youth who were transitioning to adulthood and needed support towards becoming independent young adults for education, housing and community living skills were not available for youth who had interfaced with juvenile justice. McKinney Vento in 1987 and No Child Left Behind in 2001 both addressed the need to immediately enroll a student even if documents were missing and to award partial credits for previous work completed. No Child Left Behind with Title 1 Part D funds

attempted to address some of the inequities in education and special needs of youth by awarding state education agencies money to improve practices and infrastructure for Neglected, Delinquent and At-Risk Youth, including transition services. Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 and last updated in 2006 for school age children applies to students who are detained but the detention or incarceration center has the right to alter the educational components based on the need for environmental safety and security (IDEA, 2015). The conditions of confinement and how this has impacted the education of youth and especially youth who continue to have a right to education but are between the ages of 18 and 22 is continually be addressed by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the state Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act 1974 and reformed in 2018 listed protections and improvements expected of each state to receive funds from the federal government but does not include funds for support of reentry practices. This law expects states to deinstitutionalize status offenses, separate youth from adults in secure facilities and recently added by sight and sound, removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups, addressing the disproportionate minority contact more recently referred to as Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) within the juvenile justice system. The states are expected to report and track their improvement in all these areas including school-based offenses, the amount of youth entering who have mental health needs and the percentage who had abuse and neglect issues prior to entering the facility (OJJDP, 2018).

The JJPOC educational subcommittee in CT created a list of needs to improve the educational opportunities and process for youth involved in juvenile justice in CT and proposed legislation to the JJPOC for review. The legislators involved with the CT JJPOC proposed the legislation in session and it was approved in the 2021 legislative session. Public Act No. 21-174 provides for

one state department responsible for the oversight and creation of one educational unit for all youth who are in juvenile justice facilities or incarcerated under the Department of Children and Families (PA-00174-R00HB-06667, 2021). This addresses part of the guiding principles put forth by the National Department of Education and the National Department of Justice to increase through statute the collaboration and continuity of services and address the multi-systemic issues that impede a young person's ability to successfully negotiate the multiple processes and requirements. This same CT statute effective October 1, 2022, requires this new DCF entity to ensure access to earn credits towards high school graduation, access to technology and technical education courses as well as state-wide and college preparatory testing and offer options for high school equivalency if under credited to meet graduation requirements by age 22. It ensures access to web-based content and credit recovery classes and programs. This new law provides for a unit of transition specialists specifically to ensure smooth and successful transition from secure facilities back to the community and local educational programs and from communities and local schools to secure facilities. It goes on to stipulate data collection and expectations of MOUs (memorandums of understanding) and collaborative efforts to ensure successful educational reentry. This statute finally requires the juvenile justice system to comply with the electronic record system utilized by the State Department of Education for Individualized Education Plans for all other districts for the ease of transfer and continuity of services. The state department of education, no later than August 1, 2021, by this same statute is now required to assemble a list of persons who can perform the duties of reentry coordinator per district statewide and then maintain and disseminate this list annually to all parties requesting it and post this list on their website. The list is required to be sent to the Department of

Corrections, The Department of Children and Families and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch.

Credits transfers and Reentry Expectations in CT

Extremely important, is that effective immediately upon passage of the law the Commissioners of the Departments of Education and Children and Families must develop a system for standardized conversion of credits transferred. The statute gives timelines for the transfer of records from one district to another and especially to Region 1 or the district for students in juvenile justice of no more than 5 days to transfer all records. It stipulates that the local schools, charter schools shall award credit for instruction given while in Region 1 schools within 30 days of receiving the records. This will address at least partially, depending on the conversion formula adopted, the problem that many youths face when their education is disrupted moving from one district to another within weeks of starting a term. Many students who face homelessness and educational disruption due to a families unexpected move from one district to another can also be helped by this new regulation. The state of CT is very parochial, and each educational district has been able to set its own graduation requirements if it met or surpassed the minimal state requirements, and each district uses its own curriculum and instructional pacing. Districts were not obligated to accept hours of seat time or grades on report cards for classes that were started but not completed for at least a quarter or half credit (CT, SDE, 2020). The educational subcommittee of the JJPOC has members from all state departments involved with youth, school district representatives from the districts who have detention centers in their district and juvenile justice advocates who after much discussion and negotiation recognized the shortfalls in CT's current system and the need to address it through legislation considering the education stakeholders knowing the guiding principles of NDTAC

from 2014 had not created substantial reforms. Following these guidelines and with the assistance of Peter Leone of Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and University of Maryland, the committee developed the statute to ensure the continued improvement of conditions for juvenile justice involved youth. Part of the process was to address the lack of coordination between state agencies that serve youth. A major hurdle was contemplating the plight of a young person faced with multiple school transitions through requirements of the court or agencies that are addressing other concerns such as DCF and the lack of educational continuity. The state's educational districts did not recognize partial credits or award partial credits and so a young person would need to start courses over with each change in educational district. This meant that young people could be mandated to attend school by the court as part of their release from a locked facility but due to their timing of arrival in the local school district would not be awarded credit for their time and effort in school since it fell short of expectations for credit. This practice did not incentivize young people to pursue their education.

Part of the preliminary work of the committee was to create and pilot a reentry protocol between the Hartford Public Schools and Region 1 schools. This proved effective for students who were identified by the one corrections educational liaison and the Hartford Public Schools identified point person for juvenile justice. This pilot illustrated for the committee some of the myriad of issues that could undermine current efforts. Part of the protocol was the use of a discharge planning meeting prior to release which is written in the literature as part of best practices, but this is not always possible given the court process. As stated earlier many youths in detention and in locked facilities such as Mason Youth are there before adjudication. Sometimes youth are moved and sent to foster homes or back to families in the community directly from court and prior to any discharge planning process.

The literature on reentry focuses more on community reentry and mentions school reentry but school reentry practices for most articles and studies is not the primary focus. There is a paucity of studies on what constitutes best practices for school reentry (Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012; Kubek et al., 2020; Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010; Robertson & Walker, 2018). There was a systemic literature review completed in 2022 (Kubek et al., 2020). A few articles are qualitative studies with a focus on school reentry practices (Dum & Fader, 2013; Heath & Priest, 2016; Kubek et al., 2020; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014; Mathur, Griller Clark, Hartzell, LaCroix, & McTier Jr, 2020). Several have reviewed current practices in several states and noted statistics regarding successful reentry into the community and reengagement into school for 30 to 90 days post release (Cavendish, 2014; Clark & Unruh, 2010; Griller Clark & Mathur, 2021; Heath & Priest, 2016; Hogan et al., 2010; Jain et al., 2018). All articles reviewed, as noted earlier, agree that school reentry if done well can be a major protective factor for juveniles and prevent recidivism. Although the graduation rate and reentry success back to school is substantially less for students with disabilities it is still improved by a positive connection back to school (Clark & Unruh, 2010; Griller Clark & Mathur, 2021; Mathur & Clark, 2013; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014; Mathur et al., 2020; Mathur, Griller Clark, & Gau, 2021). Several states have made changes to law, policy and practice and instituted programming to address the needs of youth in juvenile justice but there are no quantitative studies or exemplars of preferred practices fully researched and vetted (Geib, Chapman, D'Amaddio, & Grigorenko, 2011; Miller, Therrien, & Romig, 2019; Nelson et al., 2010).

Some of the promising practices and initiatives come from Texas and Iowa with memorandums of understanding between schools and detention and correction facilities that serve youth utilizing what they refer to as School Resource Officers who track and assist youth

through the systems to ensure registration, reentry, and service delivery in a timely manner during all transitions (Abbott & Barrett, 2016). The need for interagency collaboration to remove barriers for youth is imperative (Farn & Adams, 2016). Schools need to welcome youth back to their communities and to utilize positive behavior intervention and restorative practices to enhance school culture, safety and community for all youth including youth who have experienced a stay in detention or correctional facility is paramount to smooth reentry and highlighted as a promising practice by Amber Farn in an article in 2018. School reentry planning and collaboration among systems to ensure smooth transitions should begin upon entry into a locked facility which would remove the issue of an adolescent being discharged from court prior to original expectations without any planning (Blomberg et al., 2012; Geib et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2010). Blomberg reviews the Washington State Education Advocate Program in a qualitative manner and noted there are no quantitative studies regarding school reentry practices and notes students involved with educational advocates called School based prevention and intervention specialist did assist youth in feeling more accepted and integrated in school. Youth connected with an interventionist had less lag time in reenrollment and had access to services needed such as substance abuse counseling to improve educational outcomes. These efforts came forth by addressing system policy and practices and the need to alter statutes that may impede collaborative efforts. The state that made a major shift in statute and expected practices to assist youth who are involved in multiple child welfare systems, juvenile justice or are homeless is California (Jain et al., 2018). California AB 490 in 2004 mandated schools to award partial credits according to the formula advocated by McKinney Vento and noted that this was a major barrier to High School graduation. California AB 1806 stated schools must issue full or partial credits for courses successfully taken at a previous school

and must be enrolled in the same or equivalent course to complete courses where only partial credit has been awarded. The Second Chance initiative in Oakland, California through a Second Chance Act in 2008 created a dedicated transition center for youth involved in the judicial system ((Jain et al., 2018). The center and its collaborators set four goals for improvement. They conducted multidisciplinary assessments of each youth and created individualized planning through case planning including all collaborative partners. The multidisciplinary approach and community-based case-management services for youth with the planning starting at entry into the judicial system has had promising results comparing recidivism for non-violent and for violent offenses prior to implementation and after implementation. Youth with second chance services reduced recidivism from 75% to 6% for non-violent offenses with a year of service and for violent offenses from 25% to 1% within a year of services. The case-managers ensure credits are transferred to the receiving community school prior to release for a smoother school reentry and proper class scheduling. The team includes housing, financial, mental health and substance abuse services for the youth as needed with the case-manager assisting with the negotiations of all these various systems and applications. The review of this project noted that despite efforts there continued to be data collection and data sharing issues across systems. The project suffered from disparate priorities of collaborators confounding the process and confusing efforts.

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Connecticut has made strides and the newly passed legislation intends to improve the system similar to what has been highlighted in the literature to include one agency for oversight and coordination and have dedicated staff for the reentry process acting as advocates and liaisons to ensure positive connections and address the complicated array of applications and registry for services. The statute names the State Department of Children and Families as the lead entity, but

it is not the single entity since part of the implementation must include the State Department of Education which has oversight over all the CT State educational systems and districts. The improvements listed include addressing the gap in partial credit acceptance by the various school systems but defers the process to the Department of Education to codify. McKinley Vento and School House Connection 2020 delineates specifically how partial credits, seat time hours, standards based grading and alternative means of demonstrating mastery can be used and should be used to acknowledge a young person's efforts to complete an education despite multiple moves for a variety of reasons. Unless the State Department of Education creates policy and procedures that specifically state what is expected in credit transfer including specifically the expected translations of various seat hours, testing equivalency, standards-based mastery demonstration and other forms of credit and credit recovery that must be accepted and used by all state school districts and charter schools, each district will continue to have their own versions. This parochial system impedes the ability of any youth experiencing untimely school transitions and often done to them by systems out for their welfare, the ability to successfully complete a high school credential in a reasonable time.

The state of CT has begun the pilot of a proposed state-wide curriculum for K-8 grades but has not proposed a unified curriculum for high school courses (CT, Pilot Curriculum K-6, 2021). The lack of a unified curriculum can impact which, if any, course will be interpreted as an equivalent course to use for credit completion of a partial credit when moving from one system to another. The changes in law, policy and procedure by the state and state agencies can have the greatest impact for youth in juvenile justice and for their successful reentry if done explicitly and with oversight of implementation and data collection. This distal factor of a law change can be effectual with aligned changes in state department policy and procedures including changes to

expected data collection and uploads from all school districts. It will also require reviews by the State Department of Education of corrective school policy. For some districts, the change will only occur if penalties ensue for lack of cooperation with the expected changes. Each school district will need to comply with required memorandums of understanding (MOU) to ensure collaboration with case-managers and supporting agencies. The details of these MOUs are vital to true implementation. Most initiatives so far in CT have been at the discretion of each school district (CT, SDE, 2020). Currently in Connecticut Schools, the State Department of Education suggests the use of restorative approaches and practices, positive behavior interventions and practices, cognitive-behavior intervention trauma informed for schools which all can enhance school culture and climate, but none are required (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Yohannan & Carlson, 2019). Youth all benefit from improved culture and climate. It is especially important, as noted earlier, for youth who have been out of a community school for a while to reenter as accepted and valued members of the school community. Statutes, policy, and procedure can dictate expectations but the implementation at the local level is where true change can and should occur. The attitudes and behaviors of the staff will either make the initiatives and changes successful or not.

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Capstone Addressing MPH Goals Analysis

As stated Originally:

It is my hope that this degree will assist me in considering our issues in a broader perspective. Bloomberg and the MPH could offer possible collaborations, partnerships, and perspectives on our youth challenges that we alone cannot envision and conquer. I hope to make connections and broaden my perspective to enhance our ability to make lasting positive change.

As stated in Touch point 2: The competencies I am trying to enhance through course work are:

Competency 1 explanation: Policy Development and Program Planning: My intention is to focus on improving programming for adolescents in the educational environment and to influence policy change to allow for improvements that meet their needs. This is a vital area of growth given my chosen endeavors.
Competency 2 explanation: Communication: Nothing can be accomplished without effective written and verbal communication. Enlisting cooperation, enthusiasm and commitment is all predicated on effective communication.
Competency 3 explanation: Community Dimensions of Practice is chosen but cultural competency was also in the running as important. I do obtain professional development currently on cultural competence and have in the past as a social work student, so Community Dimensions of Practice edged as the area of focus and development to enhance my abilities. I must involve and work with multiple stakeholders and community partners to be effective in program and policy changes for the enhancement of youth and adolescent opportunities

Possible collaborators are Adolescents, Families, Youth Service Bureau, Office of the Child Advocate, Children's Advocacy Center, Juvenile Justice Coalition, Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services

Opportunities may be Youth Service Bureau truancy initiative, Juvenile Justice work on education for incarcerated or detained youth

I had no ideas then what my capstone would be and who was best suited to assist me. I knew it would be regarding improving the possible pathways for adolescents to achieve high school diplomas and entry into the workforce and avoid prison and detention or if detained or incarcerated facilitate reentry and completion of educational and vocational pursuits.

My review of the above as I had written it all months or years ago, have now been accomplished.

The capstone reflects my work with the multiple groups and stakeholders. I did work on policy and program development, communication, and community dimensions of practice to assist

youth who interface with the legal system obtain their credits and have assistance in re-entering the community and schools.