

Experiences and Expectations of Youth Correctional Facility Teachers

By

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MPP Essay

Submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Public Policy

Presented March 19, 2015
Commencement June 13, 2015

Abstract Approved:

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Youth corrections teachers are an under-researched group of individuals who have much to lend to the discussion surrounding youth corrections including teaching methodologies, challenges, and benefits. This report summarizes the available academic literature of the characteristics of effective youth corrections teachers in comparison with teachers who work in traditional public schools as well as effective interventions, educational effectiveness in prisons, and challenges teachers may face. Qualitative analysis of interviews with eight Oregon youth corrections teachers was conducted to determine the benefits and challenges the youth corrections teachers face. Benefits include security, great local administration, and the ability to introduce effective educational interventions to improve youths' lives. Challenges include high levels of special education, large varieties of academic level within classrooms, interactions with Oregon Youth Authority staff and the necessary implementation of the teaching methodology Academic Choice. Findings surrounding contract uncertainty are also discussed and a series of policy recommendations are made to address the challenges youth corrections teachers face.

Master of Public Policy essay of Katelyn Ann Stevens presented on March 19, 2015

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Introduction

There have been numerous studies on the characteristics of effective teachers in the United States and in Oregon, yet there is a small group of teachers who are underrepresented in academic research. That group of people consists of youth correctional teachers who work in the Oregon Youth Authority's nine high schools. These teachers provide high school, vocational, and technical education to students held in youth correctional facilities across the state of Oregon in the Oregon Youth Authority. These individuals face similar challenges and triumphs to teachers in other public school districts, yet they are a group who have unique benefits and challenges due to their working environment and the population they teach.

The current study aims to expand the discussion on youth corrections by critically examining the role of the high school teacher in secure facilities. The goal of this research is to increase our understanding of the teachers' expectations and experiences working in youth correctional facilities and to produce recommendations based on interviews with teachers in two of Oregon's secure youth facilities.

Background

In the United States there are three main models of juvenile education in the youth corrections system. In the first model, the juvenile justice organization is responsible for providing and paying for youth education in the secure facilities. In the second model, the school district where the juvenile justice facility is located is responsible for providing and paying for youth education in the facilities. Oregon employs the third model where the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is responsible for providing and paying for the youths' education in the secure facilities. Under the current model and set of contracts the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) contracts with an Educational Service District, similar to a school district, for

educational services and reimburses the school district or Educational Service District (ESD); these districts then hire, supervise, and pay the teachers who staff the educational institutions.

The Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) charge is to protect the public and reduce crime by holding youth offenders accountable for their behavior as well as by providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments (Oregon.gov/OYA). The OYA's goal is to help youth offenders lead crime-free lives and become productive members of their communities. To accomplish this goal Oregon has become a national leader in implementing evidence-based, effective treatment practices to prevent youth from committing additional crimes and to grant youth pro-social behaviors (Oregon.gov/OYA). The Oregon Youth Authority's mission, vision, and values are a large part of a complicated juvenile justice system that can be seen in the work of Oregon Youth Authority administration, staff, and youth corrections teachers.

The Literature

Prior to analyzing and discussing the data from interviews with teachers who work in youth corrections, key concepts in the existing literature and a discussion of the chosen research methods and design is provided. This literature review first reviews the process of grounded theory then examines educational effectiveness in secure facilities, benefits of prison education, incarcerated youth in the United States and in Oregon, and the challenges teachers who work in secure facilities may face.

Educational Effectiveness in Secure Facilities

In 1980 the United States' adult incarceration rate was 200 per 100,000. Five years later in the United States it had increased to 450 per 100,000 citizens (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The next year United States Department of Education established a correctional program, which identified correctional education as a discipline within the teaching profession (Miller,

1987). An increase in national attention and funding for education programs highlighted the teachers working in correctional facilities. Prior to this teachers attempted to educate incarcerated individuals and help incarcerated individuals develop learning skills without much analysis of the results. Legislators, congressmen, and local governments shifted their attention to effective teaching methodologies, not satisfied with the mere presence of a correctional education program (Miller, 1987). During the 1980s there was little scientific research into effective correctional teaching techniques, but these policymakers understood research was needed, particularly with the growing awareness of the correlation between educational deficits and incarcerated status (Miller, 1987).

To add to the slim amount of research into effective correctional teaching and to inform future hiring practices, a study was completed in the Maryland State Department of Education to determine what characteristics the current and most effective teachers held and to make comparisons. Ninety one teachers who represented all the Maryland State Department of Education correctional education programs and instructional areas became study subjects. The Evaluation of Teacher Behaviors, a “scale design that was based on findings in the literature describing the teacher characteristics effective in promoting student learning” (Miller, 1987: pg. 66) was used to compare eleven scale items. The most effective teachers were individuals who demonstrated themes of originality in the classroom, practiced student-centered behaviors, and provided a stimulating classroom environment. The most effective teachers also demonstrated a desire to continue their own learning. The teachers felt their most important contribution was in helping students achieve their own goals and they found their greatest personal rewards in students’ enjoyment of learning and students’ statements of gratitude. This may be due in part because teachers identified as members of the high group focused on the individuality and

personal worth of the students (Miller, 1987). Further, the teachers within the high group showed respect for students and students' opinions, which helped to develop a positive classroom environment. Finally, members of the high group were seen to be more stimulating, which researchers attributed to this group's ability to find humor in a variety of situations.

Teachers in the lowest quartile were more highly educated than their counterparts and had on average more years of experience in correctional teaching. Fewer categorized in the lowest group of teachers had updated their teaching skills in the last two years and they had completed fewer hours in teaching methodology. Teachers in the lowest quartile had lower scores on the Evaluation of Teacher Behaviors, particularly for the characteristics: investment, desire to help students grow, and self-awareness. Finally, members of the lowest group were not seen to be as stimulating or respectful in the classroom.

Teachers in the highest group displayed similar characteristics to the characteristics of effective teachers who work in traditional public schools. The characteristics of effective teachers working in traditional public schools are well documented (Rogers & McLean, 1994). Effective teachers are described as empathetic and respectful and who have a sense of humor (Walker, 2008; Goodman, 1983). They are energetic and active; these teachers may minimize disciplinary problems (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). These teachers are willing to be flexible in classroom in terms of decision making because they are reflective about their practices (Clark & Peterson, 1986) and they are quick to admit when they have made a mistake (Walker, 2008). In addition, effective teachers believe their students have the ability to be successful (Walker, 2008; Harvey, 1980) and manage to ensure classroom work is meaningful to students (Anderson et al., 1985). Finally, effective teachers personally accommodate at-risk students to help them feel comfortable in the classroom and in school (Walker, 2008; Miller,

Leinhardt, & Zigmond, 1988); the most effective teachers care about their students' personal problems (Walker, 2008).

Miller notes that all the teachers were competent and well-qualified, but that competence and education may not be the entire recipe for a successful classroom when working with incarcerated individuals (1987: 69). Incarcerated individuals who have not performed well academically in the past or may be currently underperforming often look to verbal and nonverbal interactions from their teachers (Graham, 1990) to determine whether they are being dismissed due to their previous academic failures (Allday, 2006). The teacher has the ability to bolster individuals' academic careers or damage their desire to learn. If incarcerated individuals feel their teachers dismiss them or see them as a burden, the incarcerated individual may be more likely to enter or remain in a cycle of academic failure (Allday, 2006; Kaplan, Peck & Kaplan, 1997).

In an evaluation of correctional teachers' perceived effectiveness, 371 incarcerated adults were given a survey containing ten statements of teacher behavior. Respondents were asked to rate their teachers based on ten characteristics. The ratings reflected the differences between those teachers who were perceived to have taught the students' the "most" and the teachers who were thought to teach the students' the "least". The teachers who were perceived to be most effective (1) demonstrated fair classroom behavior, (2) used consistent rule enforcement, (3) cared about students well-being, (4) had positive attitudes, (5) did not become angry at students, (6) were respected by students, (7) inspired students to do their best, (8) treated students as individuals, (9) wanted all students to be successful and (10) were excited about teaching (Allday, 2006). Alternatively, the teachers who were perceived to be least effective were seen to be: (1) less fair, (2) less consistent, (3) less caring, (4) less positive, (5) more hostile, (6) less

respected, and were less likely to (7) inspire students to do their best, (8) treat students as individuals, (9) encourage students to be successful, and (10) be excited about teaching (Allday, 2006).

Teachers who work in secure youth facilities may have the ability and opportunity to influence youth to help them attain an education, self-confidence, and the ability to set personal goals. Teachers' behavior can either encourage a student to be successful or it can play a major role in the student's academic failure (Allday, 2006). The teachers have the ability to affect classroom instruction by creating an environment that fosters positive teacher-student relationships, positive peer relationships, a personal sense of self, and an ability to manage emotions (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). An environment such as this has the ability to influence youths' ability to process and conceptualize information and may positively influence the learning process (Luthar & Becker, 2002).

The correctional teacher may affect the students' behavior and attitudes not only through teaching, but also through mentoring and the establishment of clear rules and expectations. Youth corrections is a unique setting in which many of the students have had past academic issues, thus to be effective teachers must put extra effort into their teaching and may need to move beyond instruction to also act as mentors. The teacher may feel it is necessary to go beyond academic content and to give instruction in independent living and vocational skills to youth in secure facilities (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). While mentoring is not unique in an academic environment it can be even more important in a correctional setting because students have high levels of school dropout and may not have had good role models in the past. Teachers may become role models for their students; those teachers identified by students as models in an

educational environment may play an important role in the learning process (Lashley & Barron, 2006).

Effective Interventions in Secure Facilities

As researchers began to understand and continue to study the role teachers in youth corrections play in the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth they were also interested in additional effective interventions or correctional rehabilitation in secure facilities. Generally, there are several definitions of rehabilitation, but studies tend to focus on three issues: (1) the intervention is planned or explicitly undertaken, (2) the intervention targets for change some aspect about the offender that is thought to cause the offender's criminality, and (3) the intervention is intended to make the offender less likely to recidivate (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000).

To provide the most effective intervention an accurate risk and needs assessment must be completed for each youth (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990) to ensure each youth receives the most appropriate treatment. Following the assessment it is imperative for the youth corrections teacher to build rapport with their students as interpersonal interaction can increase a student's motivation to change, adherence to treatment, and their rehabilitative outcomes (Gendreau, Andrews, & Theriault, 2010). In addition, positive reinforcement should be utilized. Gendreau, Cullen, & Bonta (1994) found that rewards should outweigh punishments by a ratio of 4:1, which sustain long-term prosocial behaviors (Gendreau et al., 1994).

In order for formerly incarcerated youth to be successful, research suggests quality correctional education and effective instructional practices are important aspects in their transition back into society and in their ability to secure employment (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). It is as important for the youth to have consistent educational standards and classroom time as their non-adjudicated counterparts; in a typical public school setting a student will spend

6.5 hours in class learning. In the first nationally representative study on the self-reported needs of youth who are in custody because they are either charged with or adjudicated for offenses, Sedlak & McPherson (2010) find approximately 5,400 or 76% of their sample of students (youth in detention centers to close custody) spent at least four hours in school, however, less than one-half of youth in custody (45%) say they spend at least six hours a day in school. 45% is higher than when these youth were in the community where 21% were not enrolled at all and 61% were suspended or expelled in the previous year (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). In addition, 92% of all youth who were placed in secure facilities participated in education classes during the day (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). In Oregon Youth Authority facilities, the youth who have not yet earned a high school diploma or GED are mandated to spend approximately six hours in a classroom per day and study a variety of subjects, which may include language arts, math, special education, science, art, PE, and health (Oregon Youth Authority, 2013).

Benefits of Prison Education

Oregon's youth correctional teachers may be making a significant difference in the lives of Oregon's youth as education while in prison has been shown to reduce recidivism (Harkness, Estes, Gaitanis, Holley, Lize, & Van Landingham, 2004; Florida Corrections, 2010; Piotrowsky & Lathrop, 2012; Esperian, 2010; Keys, Lydel, & Jackson, 2010; Erisman & Contardo, 2005; Chappell, 2004). In the Oregon Youth Authority recidivism is defined as a felony juvenile adjudication or adult conviction within 36 months of (a) commitment to OYA probation, (b) release to OYA parole, or (c) release to adult post-prison supervision (www.oregon.gov/BOPPPS). Recidivism is a concern in the United States. In 1994 the rate of recidivism of state prisoners was: 68% of formerly incarcerated adults were arrested for a new

offense, 47% were reconvicted, and 25% returned to prison with a new prison sentence (Langan & Levin, 2002).

In addition, educational programming while in prison may increase an individual's ability to successfully rejoin mainstream society upon release from prison (Chappell, 2004). Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, (1997) conducted a study of 3600 adult men and women released from prison for at least three years and found offenders who participated in education programs while in prison reduced their rate of re-incarceration by 29%. In 2007, a similar study was completed with incarcerated mothers in Colorado. Those who participated in vocational programs had a recidivism rate of 8.75%, those who completed their GED, 6.71% and those who participated in neither a vocational nor academic program, 26% (Wilson, Gonzalez, Romero, Henry, & Cerbana, 2007). Educational programming while in prison has been found to be cost-effective and a handsome return-on-investment for society (Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, 1997; Esperian, 2010; Oregon Youth Authority, 2013); every dollar spent on life-skills training returned a \$2 savings to the state of Maryland (Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, 1997). In addition, educational programming has also been found to enhance the employability of the formerly incarcerated (Foley, 2001; Jenkins, Steurer and Pendry, 1995; Taylor, 1992), to increase their wages (Education Testing Service, 2007) and tax-paying ability (Erisman & Contardo, 2005), and to strengthen formerly incarcerated individuals' social bonds which they can utilize in adapting to post-release life (Office of Program Policy Analysis, 2007; Wells, 2000).

The recidivism rate of youths in Oregon ranges from 22.1% for youths on OYA probation and parole to 24.0% for youths on Department of Corrections Parole and Post-Prison Supervision (Oregon Youth Authority, 2014); overall, more than 70% of youth offenders who are released into the community do not reoffend (www.oregon.gov/oia). Oregon has a low

recidivism rate particularly when compared to the United States as a whole and other states. For example, in 2008, New York State saw 66% of its juvenile offenders rearrested within two years.

Oregon's educational programs require youth to attend school for 220 days of the year with the intention that youth will obtain a high school diploma or GED certificate. Indeed, Oregon Youth Authorities' required schooling may be some of the most consistent academic exposure these youth receive (Brand, 1999). In 2013, 292 of 639 or 46% of Oregon youth received a degree while in close custody; 123 youth received a high school diploma, 120 obtained vocational certificates, 44 were awarded GED certificates, four earned a two-year college degree and one received a four-year undergraduate degree (www.oregon.gov/oia).

Incarcerated Youth

In general, incarcerated youth have a variety of unmet academic needs (Foley, 2001; Kelly, Macy, & Mears, 2005) as many students have had poor academic outcomes and attendance (Baltodano, Harris & Rutherford, 2005; Wang, Blomberg, & Li, 2005; Foley, 2001). In a meta-analysis of the academic characteristics of incarcerated youth Foley (2001) found almost half of incarcerated youth (48%) perform at lower levels than the general population, typically performing between the fifth and ninth grade levels, but generally two to three years behind their peers (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010; Leone, Meisel, & Drakeford, 2002; Moody, 2003). Prior to incarceration, currently incarcerated youth generally experienced high rates of suspension or expulsion from compulsory education at 57% and 28%, respectively (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). Incarcerated students have been found to be 26 percentage points less likely to ever graduate from high school than non-incarcerated youth (Hjalmarsson, 2008). Students in youth correctional facilities may also struggle with high rates of illiteracy, learning disabilities (Foley, 2001), mental health disorders (Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002),

family problems (Kelly, Macy, & Mears, 2005), physical health issues (Bullis, Yovanoff, & Havel, 2004; Forrest, Tambor, Riley, Ensminger, & Starfield, 2000) and substance abuse issues (Oregon Youth Authority, 2014; Young, Phillips & Nasir, 2010; Wasserman, McReynolds, Ko, Katz, & Carpenter, 2005). The characteristics of the student population may affect teaching style, approach, and behavior because these characteristics are unique to this student population.

Oregon's Incarcerated Youth

In July 2014, Oregon had 1,524 youths under its supervision. There were 885 youth under supervision in the community, 639 youth are serving sentences in the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) correctional facilities (Oregon Youth Authority, 2014). 492 of these youth are enrolled in the Oregon Youth Authorities' nine accredited high schools¹ (Institute of Education Sciences, 2013).

In Oregon, incarcerated youth committed their crimes prior to their 18th birthday; the Oregon Youth Authority also has physical custody of youth offenders committed to the Department of Corrections by adult courts, but not yet sent to state prisons due to their age. Youth may be housed in the Oregon Youth Authority from ages 12 – 24 (Oregon Youth Authority, 2013). In 2013, 75% of youth housed in the Oregon Youth Authority close-custody facilities were aged 16 – 20 (www.oregon.gov/oya). Because females commit fewer crimes than their male counterparts, 87% of the Oregon Youth Authority are male while only 13% are female.

In Oregon, 35% of Oregon Youth Authority's total population of female youths and 29% of male youths have been identified as needing special education (www.oregon.gov/oya) as compared to approximately 12% in the regular public school system (Baltodano, Harris &

¹ Oregon Youth Authority's High Schools are Robert Farrell High School, Lord High School, Three Lakes High School, Ocean Dunes High School, Riverbend High School, Trask River High School, Monroe School, Newbridge High School, and South Jetty High School.

Rutherford, 2005; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher & Poirier, 2005). Teachers may not be prepared for such large numbers of students needing special education. Special education coursework and knowledge amongst general education teachers within youth facilities may be incomplete or lacking (Moody, 2003). To satisfy the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments (IDEA) of 1997, each teacher should have sufficient special education training in order to accommodate numerous special education needs (Moody, 2003).

Conduct disorder(s) are significant within the population of the Oregon Youth Authority at approximately 50% for both genders with mental health disorder(s) at 89% and 70% for females and males, respectively (OYA Quick Facts, 2014); behavioral disorders are typically higher than learning disabilities (Baltonado, et al., 2005) and may cause additional classroom disruptions for teachers in youth corrections (Moody, 2003). Students who have been identified as needing special education courses and who have conduct disorders may present significant challenges for youth corrections as these students may have greater difficulty adjusting to the expectations of teachers and peers (The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice, 2010).

Teachers' Challenges

Teachers working within secure facilities face many challenges in teaching their incarcerated students. One primary challenge may include differences between the institution's goals and the intended educational processes and goals (Young, Phillips & Nasir, 2010; Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). A teacher's ideal environment and classroom may be restricted by the secure facility's policies (The National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice [EDJJ], 2010) where contraband items (cell phone, keys, or technology) are banned and where

classroom items (pens, calculators, and erasers) are carefully accounted for. Secure youth facilities generally prioritize security and safety considerations that can supersede educational efforts (EDJJ, 2010; Altschuler, 1998); this may not be an effective educational practice (Gemignani, 1994). Indeed, security concerns may limit the facilities' ability to provide critical educational interventions for the youth (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010) and may impede successful implementation of academic programs (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010; EDJJ, 2010; Houchins, Jolivette, Shippen & Lambert, 2010). In the case of special education and budget constraints the correctional facility could choose to reduce the special education program to ensure security protocols are maintained (EDJJ, 2010).

A second challenge for teachers who work in youth corrections is the extreme variety in student performance levels (Young et al., 2010; Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). Teachers may have to limit the subject matter or adapt their teaching methodology to fit a variety of academic levels. In addition, juvenile corrections schools have a disproportionate number of students who need special education and related services, which means many students need an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An IEP is an individualized document designed for one student's academic needs that contains (1) a statement of the child's present level of performance, (2) the child's annual educational goals, (3) special education supports and services that the school will provide to help the child reach his or her goals, (4) modifications and accommodations the school will provide to help the child make progress, (5) accommodations the child will be allowed when taking standardized tests, (6) how and when the school will measure the child's progress toward annual goals, (7) and transition planning that prepares teens for life after high school. If an evaluation has been completed and it is determined a student has special needs then an Individualized

Education Program is collaboratively drafted. Moody (2003) found general education teachers, who work in youth corrections, have a lack of knowledge on how to read student Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), how to effectively implement IEPs, and how to provide accommodations and supports for students with special needs; this general lack of knowledge means that general education teachers must rely heavily on the special education program, which may be underfunded and under-staffed (Moody, 2003).

A third challenge for teachers working in youth corrections is a dynamic student population with a range of sentence lengths that typically last nine months to one year, but may be shorter, particularly in juvenile detention facilities (Young et al., 2010; Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan & Leone, 2009), and the necessary, multifaceted, and short module-driven curriculum (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). Traditional school quarters and single-lectures are difficult to implement in juvenile corrections due to the unique population. Some youth corrections facilities have accounted for this issue by implementing month long modules or by utilizing the same teacher and period, with individualized instruction, to teach several subjects (Young et al., 2010).

A fourth challenge for teachers who work in youth corrections is a perceived lack of professional development courses (Mathur, Clark, & Schoenfeld, 2009). Professional development and continuing education help foster innovative teachers who utilize different teaching methodologies. (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014) These professional opportunities have the ability to maintain and even enhance the quality of teachers (Wichadee, 2011). Indeed, Miller (1987) found that teachers who had updated their skill set and teaching methodology were rated more highly on an Evaluation of Teacher Behaviors by their peers and their students.

Methods

A careful examination of the academic literature revealed a lack of research into the characteristics of youth correctional teachers and a limited examination of youth correctional teachers' experiences and expectations, making the current study exploratory in nature and providing researchers with ideas for future research. Due to the nature of available literature it was decided to utilize the grounded theory approach, which is a "qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Straus & Corbin, 1990: pg. 24). Using grounded theory is one significant method when conducting emergent qualitative research, which is well suited for studying uncharted phenomena (Charmaz, 2008) such as the experiences, expectations, and characteristics of Oregon's youth correctional teachers.

The present study is a qualitative case study of teachers who work in two of the Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) high schools. A case study is defined as an in-depth analysis of a group of people by one or several methods (Babbie, 2004). While this case study of Oregon's youth corrections provides useful insight into the roles and lives of correctional teachers, it may not be generalizable to the United States or to the state of Oregon. These particular facilities may have institutional characteristics not found in other youth facilities; teachers may be unique to these facilities based on which Education Service District they contract with.

Participants were chosen from a relatively small pool of individuals who teach in state youth correctional facilities. Further, the two facilities were chosen due to several unique features: (1) Each facility represents different groups of youth in terms of gender; (2) Each facility operates a high school and; (3) Interviewing teachers from two youth corrections facilities allowed for possible comparisons between teachers' perspectives who choose to work

with different populations. Due to the number of research participants I was able to interview from each facility these comparisons became less viable, however, comparisons are possible to teachers who work in traditional public schools.

These certified teachers work closely with the Oregon Youth Authority staff, incarcerated youth, and other teachers, thus the teachers can make the best contribution to our understanding of youth corrections in Oregon. Teachers can provide both broad and detailed understandings on the demands placed upon them, challenges they push through, and positive experiences with the facility. Our understanding of the role of the teacher can be best understood from the experiences and perspectives of Oregon's youth corrections teachers themselves.

I attempted to include correctional teachers from as many subject areas as possible; although a number of teachers taught in several content areas, most specialized in a subject area. I contacted both youth corrections high schools' principals via phone and email to obtain the names of teachers who would be willing to participate in the study. In both email and telephone conversations the research study was explained and I requested an interview. One teacher was not comfortable with their opinions being included in the study after the interview was completed as they became concerned about possibly being identified. After the individual rescinded their participation, the total number of participants became eight. The number of teachers who work in the two schools is 16. The final sample included four males and four female teachers with a variety of teaching experiences and backgrounds.

I utilized semi-structured interviews and obtained approval for 24 open-ended questions (See Appendix A) from the university's Institutional Review Board. My interviewing guide was meant to examine the role of the teacher within a correctional facility, but also included potential challenges and benefits about working within such facilities. My intention was for the

participants to talk openly about their careers, feelings, their peers, their administration, and other facets of their daily working lives. Every teacher had much to say about their personal challenges and benefits of working in a secure youth facility.

I provided a consent form that explained the terms of participation in the research project and asked each interviewee to sign the document and take a copy home with them; this procedure assured the researcher that each participant understood the terms of their participation. I then asked the interviewee if it would be possible to record the interview. Interviews were predicted to take approximately one hour, but in actuality interviews ranged from 30 minutes 1.5 hours.

After the eight interviews were complete, I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the data using a grounded theory, which is “one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: pg. 22). In other words, I did not begin with a theory and then test it. Instead, I started with a group of individuals I wanted to study and let relevant information emerge from the data and through analysis. Those pieces of information merged into themes: unsupportive Educational Service District and demanding contracts, challenges posed by the student population, challenges posed by the Oregon Youth Authority staff, security, and positive aspects of the teachers careers.

In an effort to protect the anonymity in a relatively small sample of teachers, each of the eight participants were assigned a code name for this study i.e. “Mark or Mary”.

Findings & Discussion

The following section outlines the findings of this research in contract uncertainty and in the benefits and challenges of teaching within a secure youth correctional facility. Benefits of teaching in a secure facility include: security, ease of working with a treatment manager, the long term incarcerated students, great local administration, and helping the youth succeed academically. Challenges of teaching in a secure facility include: extraordinary special education needs, variety of academic level within the classroom, the necessary implementation of Academic Choice, and working with Oregon Youth Authority staff. Finally, issues associated with contract uncertainty are explored.

Benefits of teaching within secure youth correctional facilities

Academic literature has documented challenges in security and short stays within youth facilities (Young, Phillips & Nasir, 2010; Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010; The National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice [EDJJ], 2010; Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan & Leone, 2009), but this sample of teachers believes teaching in a youth corrections facility is much more manageable, fulfilling, and less difficult than teaching in a traditional public school for a number of reasons including: security, great local facility administrative support, and ease of contacting one treatment manager. The teachers spoke not only of students who will stay in the facility for short periods of time, but also of those who will reside in the youth corrections facility for many years; the teachers get to watch these youth grow up and may become parental figures in their lives. In addition, the teachers spoke of the reason they continue to work in youth corrections, which is primarily because they care deeply about their students and want to see them succeed via effective educational interventions.

Security

Security and safety are primary concerns within a secure facility (Inderbitzin, 2006). Each facility has a tall chain link fence enclosure with gated access points into the facility, into the classroom buildings, living units, and multi-purpose buildings. In addition, video surveillance provided additional security for the youth facilities. Visitors are required to walk through a metal detector, wear an identifying badge, and be escorted into the facility by a staff member.

The two secure youth facilities varied in several ways. In one facility, a visitor walked through a gated and locked entrance to find living units, a high school, an intake unit, and multi-purpose buildings. The high school was an enclosed and locked building; the locked door and presence of staff appeared to be the biggest difference between a traditional public school and this secure institution. The teachers who work in this facility have their own classrooms and the students come to this dedicated space for their class periods.

The second smaller facility was slightly different in that the teachers were required to teach within the youth's living units and in a building called Career and Technical Education (CTE). Unless the class utilized contraband most classes were taught in the living units. This situation requires teachers to bring a cart of teaching materials with them to each class and to remove it at the end of the class session. This situation is not necessarily a concern for the majority of the teachers who seemed comforted by the security measures surrounding classroom materials and their cart, however one interviewee found it be an inconvenience as John stated, *"Yeah. It's quite a pain."* John's classes require materials with glass components. A situation involving broken glass is a large security concern, particularly if the broken glass is in the living units. This is an instance where security trumps education within the facility. To ensure safety and security John's class was permanently moved to the CTE building. John commented,

“That’s more convenient [because] I don’t have to go out of the building.” Most of the classes are held within the living units and every teacher must be vigilant about collecting classroom materials.

A number of teachers felt institutional security measures improved the working environment and felt that it is more manageable to teach in a correctional facility than in a traditional public school because of the presence of the staff, the structure of the facilities, and built-in incentives for good youth behavior. As Brittany spoke about situations in which she is dealing with potential problems, *“there is a little bit more respect because the [youth] respect their staff and when the staff start to step in it shuts down immediately because they know that there’s further consequences.”* Several teachers, who have worked in traditional public schools and youth corrections facilities, believed it is easier to teach in a correctional facility than in a public high school. Mark spoke about the differences between his two careers in a public school system and in a secure facility: *“I can have [unruly] students removed in a closed facility [but not in a traditional public school] so I think it’s easier [to teach in a closed facility].”* Another teacher, Brittany believed the facility provided *“a little bit more safety”* when compared to traditional schools. Mark believed the experience of teaching in a correctional facility to be *“more manageable and much more fulfilling.”*

It is important to note these teachers believe in the security of their respective facilities and that they believe teaching in a correctional facility is more manageable than teaching in a traditional public school as this piece of information could potentially increase the number of highly qualified teachers who apply to work in Oregon’s youth correctional facilities.

Ease of Working with one Treatment Manager

When situations involving students' arise it can be easier for teachers to work with a singular case manager or counselor over a large group of parents. The treatment manager is employed by the Educational Service District to provide case management and counseling. As Mark stated, *"I don't have to deal with parents, I have to deal with their treatment manager, a person who is easier to get ahold of... imagine trying to get ahold of 30 parents with my concerns versus just one treatment manager."* It is less of an adversarial position for the teachers as well because the treatment manager is a colleague not a parent. As John stated, *"They're not substitutes for parents though. Parents would be more proactive in making sure that a special education student had the support she needed in the classroom."* It is not the case that this treatment manager cares less, but more a consideration of the professional environment in a small secure facility where each employee must work collaboratively to accomplish their educational goals. The collaborative and small environment make it more manageable to accomplish those educational goals because of almost instantaneous communication.

Long Term Incarcerated Students

Literature suggests teaching in a youth corrections facility can be challenging due to the youths' short stays and the necessary short teaching modules. The students who are not mentioned are those who are sentenced to stay in youth corrections for long periods of time. Due to Oregon law where incarcerated individuals can be held in youth facilities until the age of 25 some youth can reside in a youth facility for more than a decade. Mike spoke about individuals who are sentenced under the Department of Corrections mandatory minimum sentencing laws who will stay in the facility for years. *"We'll keep them here for 5 years, 10 months...I will know them for a while and have them with me for a while."* These long sentences allow teachers to

watch these students grow up as Mike said, *“It’s always nice because you get to watch them grow.”* It may be better to see them succeed in academics as Mike remembered, *“In some cases I’ve seen guys come in at age 15 and then leave at age 24...I’ve seen a guy come in with no high school credit and walk out the door with a bachelor’s degree.”* This kind of academic achievement has happened *“a dozen times since I’ve been teaching,”* remembers Mike. It is potentially a more rewarding situation for youth corrections teachers who become mentors and role models to youth who may need the most help.

Supportive Local Administration

The teachers felt the superintendent of the youth facility and the principal of the high school can play a huge role in whether they feel secure and supported in their careers. Talking about his principal, Mark said, *“My administrator is very good in supporting me...sending me to conferences and is very open to me...wanting to do this conference [with] Nebraska’s Department of Education.”* Indeed, a supportive principal can even attract highly-qualified teachers. Upon meeting the principal for the first time, Kathy remembered, *“I liked when I met with [my administrator(s) for the first time]. They seemed like a good team to work with.”* Supportive and fair administration can play a role in retaining teachers as well. In her relationship with her principal, Brittany noted, *“He treats us as equals rather than [that] he’s just a supervisor or a superior to us.”* Indeed, supportive local administration (principals) may play an important role in promoting and sustaining change in schools so those schools “become places where all students are welcome, and where all students learn essential academic and non-academic lessons in preparation for life in the community” (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005). The interviewees noted changes in special education approaches and improved test scores in the

facilities due to supportive local administration; school leadership has been linked to improved student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Helping Youth is the Goal

The youth corrections teachers spoke of how the incarcerated youth are the reason they continue working in the secure youth facilities in spite of the numerous daily work-related challenges they may face and long travel times to arrive at work. The majority of the teachers love working with the youth. Several of the teachers live in Portland, but consistently commute for more than an hour to arrive at their respective youth corrections facility to teach. Mary talked about her long day: *“There’s days that I’m gone on average 11 hours a day from when I leave my house in the morning until when I come home.”* In at least one case the students are the reason the teacher stays in their career, *“I don’t get along that well with the other teachers here...but I like my students.”* As John stated, *“They’re the best teachers of teachers that I’ve ever had.”* Brittany said, *“I love it! I love the interaction...I love their stories. They’re so passionate about certain things that it rubs off on you.”* Nearly all of the teachers spoke about how they have always known they wanted to work with disadvantaged youth and how youth corrections is the perfect career for them. Mike noted, *“At first it was the job that I had and then over time it’s become the job that I love.”* However, at least one teacher was not aware they had applied for a position in a youth corrections facility until they arrived for the interview. As Brittany remembered, *“They were like, “You have to leave all your stuff, you have to get buzzed in and out, you have to sign in,” and it started coming together when I showed up and it said detention hall and youth correctional facility.”* After her interview and tour of the facility Brittany said, *“I fell in love...you know...it was actually worth being here.”* Many of the teachers commented on how they are committed to the youth and their needs. Mark stated, *“I really enjoy*

my job and I really care about the students um I view it more as a service and a commitment to the kids.” Kathy summed up the majority of the teachers’ sentiments with the following statement: *“I really enjoy my job and I really care about the students.”*

It is important to highlight, in spite of environmental challenges, these teachers who work in Oregon’s youth corrections high schools want to continue working with incarcerated youth to improve their future outcomes; in at least one career this is the reason the teacher continues to work in the closed custody facility. Every career has aspects its employees hope will change for the better, but this career in youth corrections has people its employees hope will change for the better. It is the youth that keep the youth corrections teachers excited about their careers. It is the youth who encourage youth corrections teachers to continue working in an unknown, somewhat unappreciated, and demanding job in spite of (1) an Educational Service District that supports little and demands much in the teachers’ contracts and (2) a youth population that requires significant additional attention in terms of classroom preparation. As long as Oregon continues to incarcerate youth it must also continue to hire teachers who care deeply about improving the lives of the incarcerated youth and who are willing to put in extra effort to ensure the youths’ success.

Teachers’ Challenges When Working Within Youth Correctional Facilities

The teachers spoke of four distinct challenges they face with working within a youth correctional facility. The first challenge is the special education program is under-funded and under-staffed, particularly for the number of students who require special education services including an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The second challenge can be found in the large differences, within each classroom, in academic level. The third challenge for the teachers is found in the high number of conduct disorders (behavioral issues) and mental health issues

within the total Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) population, which make it necessary to implement the Academic Choice teaching methodology. The last major challenge the teachers spoke of was the Oregon Youth Authority staff's lack of knowledge and punitive approaches.

Special Education

Due to the prevalence of students with special education needs within juvenile justice facilities there are special education programs (SPED) in place to help those students succeed (Bullis, Yovanoff, Nueller, & Havel, 2002; Foley, 2001). In one juvenile facility the SPED program was comprised of two individuals who were responsible for doing “push-ins” with the students and managing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This approach takes students who have varying academic needs and provides individualized one-on-one instruction in a classroom setting with a variety of topics from math to reading. This inclusive approach is new to the facility as it has been introduced by an incoming principal. In the second juvenile facility the SPED program consisted of one individual or case manager who handled all of the special education cases and Individualized Education Plans. This individual filled the role of counselor for the youth in the facility. Thus, when problems arose in the facility this individual would come to the living unit and speak with the student to help and understand their issue and potentially solve it. This second approach is not a standardized special education approach and it means students are pulled from class unexpectedly, which can alter the routine class schedule. Individualized solutions such as these are not unique to these teachers, as Inderbitzin (2006: pg. 442) found flexible “people workers” to be the most effective amongst living unit staff in a youth correctional facility at reaching incarcerated youth “to get the resident to work within the living unit’s rules”.

Each facility is limited to one full time trained individual per facility. One teacher may not be enough to support the general education teachers. John believes, *“there is no visible special ed support in my classroom. There’s no classroom assistance, no pulling out, no push-ins, no resource room.”* However, the special education teacher states, *“I would get rid of a coworker if I could. Not a team player. I have to tread lightly because when I pull a student from [that] class it’s almost more of a hassle to deal with [the teacher] than it is with the student.”* One teacher may not be enough for every incarcerated youth with special education needs to receive the academic attention he or she needs to succeed in school, particularly with a perceived increase in the youth population. Sue remembered, *“We used to have classes of eight, now we have classrooms of 16 – 19.”* John and Frank commented on how they appreciate the small class size, but as John stated, *“It’s not really a substitute for better special ed support.”*

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requirements can be demanding, in an inclusive classroom, for the general education teachers to fulfill, especially with their lack of special education training (Moody, 2003) and with only one trained individual in the facility who can access students’ juvenile justice information because as Brittany commented, *“our special education teacher does because [they] have to pull up the behavior reports”*. In the past, general education teachers relied on large departments of teachers who were trained to help special needs students. Sue commented on the changes in staff, *“When I went to work here I had 24 teachers, I had a department of seven and now there’s me and finally this year I have a half-time [teacher helping]. We used to have 24 here and 24 at [another school] and now we’re cut down to 10 total.”*

Academic Level in Classroom

Overwhelmingly, the teachers commented to the researcher that to be successful in teaching youth who are incarcerated they must be willing to teach in short modules due to the dynamic student population who stay for variable amount of time (Gagnon, Barber, Van Loan & Leone, 2009) and be able to teach several classes simultaneously as there is a large range of academic abilities within each class. While Frank and Mark commented on how they have adjusted to a variety of academic levels in the classroom, John was more frustrated and confused on how to approach teaching in such an environment. Frank explained his class: *“[class is broken into several levels of understanding]. I have the sheets. I have the algebra sheet, the geometry sheet, and the algebra two sheet which lists the assignments [for each level of math].”* Frank operates several classes and within each class there is variety of levels of understanding amongst students. John commented on the variety of academic levels in his classes: *“How should be teaching students who are well below grade level? Right now we have no approach. All the students are in the same class. For a while I was teaching physics and a more mathematical aspect of physics and a student pointed to the bar on the fraction and asked, “Does this little line thingy mean multiply or divide?” So, how should I be teaching if she’s in the same physics class as an Algebra 2 student?”* Mark also has a combined course as he stated, *“So the way it works is English, social studies, and journalism are all combined so it depends on what the student needs credit wise.”* Mark will tailor the course so the student gains the correct credit they need to graduate. As he commented, *“I’m not your typical kill and drill teacher. I’m also not the teacher who says all students must read the same book at the same time so I could have 15 students doing 15 different things in my classroom based on their interest and needs. I bring in a lot of people from the outside...guest day long type programs, film screenings,*

workshops, and guest speakers.” While this approach is generous of Mark it can be much more time-consuming and demanding.

Academic Choice

Academic Choice is a Responsive Classroom strategy, which allows children the ability to make structured choices throughout the entire learning process with the goal of creating self-directed and self-motivated learners (Denton, 2005). In traditional public schools teachers dictate the curriculum within their own classrooms with minimal student choice allowed. The difference between traditional teaching or “top-down” and Academic Choice or “bottom-up” approaches is the degree to which students are allowed to choose the path of their own learning. Due to the nature of teaching the lesson will always be lead by a teacher; however, in Academic Choice the classroom is less rigidly controlled by the teacher because the teacher lets students make choices at every step in the learning process. This creates a classroom where fifteen simultaneous projects are producing the same set of learning outcomes, as set by the teacher.

The curriculum in youth corrections and traditional public schools is based on federal and state requirements and the exact curriculum has been determined by the individual school districts (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014). The students are expected to satisfactorily meet those criteria to earn a class grade; however, in Academic Choice students have the explicit opportunity to make successful and unsuccessful choices while working at their own pace (Denton, 2005).

Education is primarily intended to academically educate students, but also to provide a space to learn socialization skills (Pearson, 2015). For the majority of incarcerated students the traditional public school system did not work for them academically or socially; indeed, the traditional public schools may actually fail to transmit conformity (Grant, 1979). Academic

Choice allows nonconforming students the chance to become competent students and lessens the pressure to fit into the traditional public school mold. It is unclear for every individual student if it is the teaching method, teacher, environmental factors, or another reason why these students did not succeed in a traditional public school classroom. It is clear that incarcerated students have difficulty with traditional classroom styles and a resounding lack of respect for authority with a high incidence of conduct disorders and mental health issues, which encourages the youth corrections teacher to approach their education in a choice-based style. When employed in the classroom Academic Choice may help children have some degree of autonomy that may be missing in traditional public school classrooms (Denton, 2005).

The implementation of Academic Choice is necessary because it can be difficult to motivate incarcerated youth because they have a lack of respect for authority as Kathy commented, *“They tend to have no concept of authority whatsoever.”* However, Kathy also noted, *“they tend to be very opinionated and outspoken about their opinions. [The lack of respect for authority makes] it interesting when you’re trying to tell them what they need to do, [but] I find offering them options tends to take away any prickliness they have when it comes to authority figures.”* The teacher’s ability to walk the line between rule enforcer and flexible educator to modify youths’ behavior may be a recipe for incarcerated youths’ success. As Mark related, *“I had one student who didn’t want to do anything... and I just had a really hard line with her and it took about three weeks...she got bored of just sitting there and she came to me and said, I’ll do this one.”* Mark spoke about another student, *“I just had a student who left recently whose father was a commercial fisherman in Alaska...that’s what she wanted to work on...she had three books on the topic already...I pulled out magazines and articles on commercial fishing and boating and if you gave her anything like that she was phenomenal.”*

The successful implementation of Academic Choice may produce better test results and more successful students as Frank said, *“This year they have done far better at OAKS than they have in previous years.”* A teacher’s refusal to implement alternate teaching methodologies may produce less successful students as Mark commented, *“It’s frustrating because we see kids being successful and then they go to those classes and they’re not successful.”*

Education while incarcerated may be the key to a successful future, but the people who provide that education may also be the key. When youth corrections teachers are (1) unwilling to spend more time with special needs students or (2) are unable to teach several levels of understanding of a subject during one class period or (3) are unwilling to provide choices for their incarcerated students is a situation in which Oregon’s incarcerated youth will have difficulty succeeding academically. The intended reformation of youth by the Oregon juvenile justice system is to modify behavior and systematically educate to the youths’ advantage; if those goals are not met than the youth has the potential to leave the facility no better off than when they entered the facility; indeed, the youth may have a higher chance of recidivating.

Challenges Posed by Oregon Youth Authority Staff

While the facilities’ principals seemed incredibly supportive of the educational efforts at both youth facilities in this study, the correctional staff (COs) working in the Oregon Youth Authority facilities can vary in their support for educational programming. John said he felt: *“it would be reasonable for the culture to be a little more supportive of education than it is... for example, right now I’m teaching [outside] and it’s spring so the natural thing to do is to have students plant a garden...and the OYA guy that I work with...he’s really easy to work with [because] he’s very supportive, [but] before he was hired the person who worked there before was not at all supportive of the school going out to the greenhouse...so that one person is*

making a big difference in my experience teaching". Kathy mentioned her feelings for the OYA and its staff are overwhelmingly positive, but that a few OYA staff work in a youth facility to *"earn a paycheck when really they should want to help these [youth]."* The majority of teachers agreed that working with OYA staff is generally pleasant. When asked about how she felt about the OYA, Mary stated, *"[The OYA] has a lot of great employees and there are lots of them that I enjoy working with. There are some that...can be punitive at times."*

In a youth corrections facility the correctional staff and the teachers work in the same conditions, but may have different roles they play with the youth; line staff (individuals who ensure facility rules are followed) and teachers may have different approaches in handling youth in a secure youth facility. When Mary began her job at the youth corrections facility she did not have an easy time implementing new and different strategies, particularly special education strategies, with the Oregon Youth Authority staff. In a rigid structure such as youth corrections it can be difficult to implement changes (Farrell, Young & Taxman, 2011). After a couple of months Mary was able to have *"gotten through to most of them"* about what different youth need. Mary spoke about the staff's opinion that her techniques gave favor to some youth over others. The old philosophy had been to treat all youth in the same manner, but Mary introduced the idea that youth with special needs should be treated in a variety of ways depending on their individual situations. As Mary commented, *"It doesn't mean it's unfair or it doesn't mean it's spoiling them. It's everyone is different and needs different things. Some of them may not agree with how I handle everything, but they go with it because they know that it works, but it took a while to get there."* The Oregon Youth Authority staffs' ability to regard education as the most important component of the rehabilitation process is when the most effective school has been produced (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1994).

Issues with Contract Uncertainty

The perception of the majority of the teachers interviewed is that individuals who operate the Educational Service Districts (ESDs) often make the teachers working in youth correctional facilities feel they are not supported nor secure in their teaching positions due to an uncertain system where contracts can be terminated after any two year period. The Oregon Department of Education may decide to contract with another Educational Service District after the contract has expired for any reason. In Oregon, there are 19 Educational Service Districts; the Oregon Department of Education has many choices with whom to contract for teachers' services.

Unsupportive Educational Service District

In at least two instances in the last sixteen years, the Oregon Department of Education decided to contract with a different Educational Service District. All of the teachers from the former Educational Service District were laid off and replaced by individuals from the new Educational Service District (ESD). One individual noted this practice has since been made illegal under the Oregon Administrative Rules due to a lawsuit. As Mark stated, *"In 1999 when [the ESD] took over from Oregon Department of Education (ODE) some employees were terminated just because the ESD said we want somebody else although there was a lawsuit and three teachers were reinstated as a result and that one lawsuit drove the change in the Oregon Administrative Rules."* The teachers wondered why the contracts could not possibly last longer than two years as they do in traditional public schools. *"It seems to me like they should be able to get the contract longer than two years."*

Teachers spoke of non-supportive ESD administration. As Sue noted, *"No, no they are not supportive at all. They started out that way, haven't been for a long time...they don't have a clue about what our population's like."* The Educational Service Districts are located a

significant distance from the secure facilities, which may be contributing to teachers' feelings that the ESD is unsupportive. When asked about how much interaction the facility and the ESD have the answer from Kathy was *"very little. It's so far away."*

In a traditional public school district the teachers would be geographically closer to their high-level administrators. Due to where the Educational Service Districts (ESD) are located they can become separate entities from their respective schools and it is not simple for ESD or ODE employees to visit each school. For example, Multnomah ESD is located in Portland, Oregon, but operates programs and services that can be 190 miles apart (www.mesd.k12.or.us). This large distance may make the teachers feel that they are not valued members of the ESD. As Kathy commented, *"I don't feel like I'm part of the ESD. I feel like we're just sort of a separate unit. I feel definitely a camaraderie and a sense of cohesion with people here with our school, but [the ESD] feels like a separate entity to me."* The teachers indicated that in most traditional public schools the school board and the National Parent Teacher Association may have a huge role to play in how the school is organized; the teachers feel the ESD does not play this type of role in the youth facilities. John stated, *"I think they're kind of bad, but I don't know...these guys [the ESD] are kind of disorganized."* As one teacher worded the sentiment: *"I don't think [the ESD] gets too involved."* In a conversation with an ODE employee it was mentioned that his organization has almost no interaction with the teachers in Oregon's youth facilities. This lesser role in the daily operations of the school may contribute to the teachers' beliefs that *"other than the principal...nobody really knows what we do here. I feel like we're so separate."*

The teachers explained they have little interaction with the ESDs and what interaction does exist is in the form of directives, monthly payments, and biennial contractual agreements. Sue remembered when the ESD required its teachers to obtain advanced subject endorsements,

but did not want to pay for additional training, *“They demanded that...uh two years ago that our Language Arts teachers get a second endorsement that the math teachers, if they weren’t advanced math, go back and get an advanced endorsement and the teachers had to fight to get that paid for even though the institution or the ESDs are demanding it.”* A year of additional training from a state university can cost approximately \$11,000 for tuition, fees, and educational materials alone (www.oregonstate.edu). Even though the teachers are represented by respective unions no teacher mentioned the union’s assistance in having the Educational Service District pay for the required additional training.

Increasingly Restrictive Contracts

The teachers also worry about how the contracts seem to only become harsher for the teachers. As stated by several teachers who were interviewed: under current contracts there is less time off than under past contracts and no ability to choose vacation days. In addition, a policy has made it impossible for substitute teachers to cover for the youth corrections teachers for extended periods of time because substitute teachers no longer qualify as continuous education. This situation is different than for teachers who work in traditional public school settings as they generally receive three months off every year in the summer. This creates a situation in which the youth facilities’ teachers cannot take more than a week of vacation at one time. The decision to vacation is specified during certain times in the year; teachers are mandated to take time off during assigned vacation periods. As Sue remembered, *“[Previously] you got to choose when you got to go on vacation and now you can’t...[and] that is a big part of our teacher burnout...there’s no rest...there’s no getting away...”* *“It used to be that we had a 202 day contract... the kids are in school 222 days [so] we had 20 days a year that we could choose if we wanted to go anywhere [on vacation]. Now we’re working the extra 20 days because*

someone decided substitute teachers don't qualify as continuous education." Mark feels he needs more vacation to fully recharge, *"we've got to have either an extra five or 10 days in the year that we can take off, even if school's still going, have a sub come in."*

Job Security

The contracts make at least one teacher nervous as they are not sure of their job security. As Mark commented, *"Oh god, it's crazy um it's continual...you know...knot in your stomach every two years because you wonder about whether the ESD is going to maintain the contracts with ODE or will some other district take over the youth correctional educational programs."*

In a working environment employees should feel supported so those employees will become and continue to be invested in the company or organization, which may lead to better business performance (Crowley, 2013). When members of an organization do not feel invested it can be detrimental to the organization (Crowley, 2013). In this situation Federal law requires incarcerated youth to be educated. If these teachers decided they were tired of their unsupportive Educational Service District or their contracts they could leave their positions, which would leave the Oregon Youth Authority, the Educational Service District, and the Oregon Department of Education in a lurch, particularly with the lack of available substitute teachers in Oregon as noted by substitute teachers (National Education Association, 2014).

Recommendations

Recommendations are offered on how participating agencies can provide the best environment for Oregon's youth corrections teachers.

Recommendation One: Strategic Recruitment of Teachers

Of the eight teachers interviewed for this study three were substitute teachers prior to their permanent position, three had friends tell them of the job opening, and one did not know

they were applying to work at a youth corrections facility. The majority had worked (or wanted to work with) at-risk or vulnerable children, but most came to the job from seemingly haphazard circumstances to teach youth who may need the most help of any students. Future recruitment of youth corrections teachers should be strategic and wide-reaching to attract highly-qualified candidates. The many benefits of working in a secure facility should be emphasized. The benefits include, but may not be limited to security, ease or working with a treatment manager, relationships the teacher can build with long term incarcerated students, great local facilities administration, and the benefit of helping students from a myriad of situations succeed in the classroom. Future teachers may find the youth corrections teaching position more manageable and fulfilling. Youth corrections facilities may financially benefit from the addition of highly-qualified teachers in terms of academic success and lower rates of recidivism from the youth population.

Recommendation Two: Assess the Magnitude of Special Education needs within Youth Correctional Facilities' Schools

The literature and the teachers interviewed for this study both demonstrate there are large numbers of students who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and who require an Individualized Education Plan. The literature notes IEPs require additional training, time, and resources to implement. The teachers have noted each special education program is lacking in staff and in resources, however, there is a lack of definitive data that demonstrates the prevalence of special education needs within secure youth facilities. It has been demonstrated there is a problem with providing special education within the secure youth facility, but the extent of the issue must be assessed to determine what care the students need compared to the care the students are currently receiving within the secure facility.

Recommendation Three: Reduce Contract Uncertainty through Transparency

The majority of the teachers spoke of the contracts from a disturbed perspective and one teacher wondered why they were unable to have the contracts last longer than two years. Teachers should have an understanding of why the contract is not held for longer than two years. The Oregon Department of Education and the Educational Service Districts should ensure the teacher's understand this process by allowing a lawyer to explain the process. This transparency may increase not only the teachers' understanding, but also their trust and support of their parent organizations. An increased understanding may lessen the fears these teachers hold about how secure their jobs are and may explain why the contracts seem to only become increasingly restrictive for the teachers. A reduction in contract uncertainty would be a step in the right direction of keeping highly-qualified teachers as employees and in recruiting replacements when current teachers leave their careers.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

This research provides a unique glimpse into the working careers of Oregon's youth corrections teachers that include challenges and benefits of their careers. It is important to begin the conversation about how youth corrections teachers view the many aspects of their careers and how it may affect their students and their career longevity. Current research into youth corrections mostly surrounds the issues of recidivism and program analyses. This research allows for an in-depth look into a group of individuals who may have the most potential to reduce recidivism and launch incarcerated students into more productive lives; with a few changes these teachers could gain a little job satisfaction and continue to do the work they enjoy the most – teaching incarcerated youth.

This case study is an exploratory first study conducted in order to understand youth corrections teachers' experiences, challenges, and expectations in Oregon. The present study has several limitations: (1) it addresses a small portion of the teachers who are employed in secure facilities; (2) the researcher visited two of the 19 Education Service Districts in the state; (3) the youth were not interviewed, which had the potential to provide a more complete picture of each secure high school and; (4) the sample size is small with possible selection bias and a lack of generalizability.

Moving forward, additional research on youth corrections teachers should focus on a larger scope, which would include interviews with youth corrections teachers across the United States and Oregon, but should also include interviews with incarcerated youth, correctional officers, and secure youth facilities administrators. In addition, professionals from the Educational Service District(s) and the Oregon Department of Education should be interviewed as this research indicates these two organizations may not be supportive of the teachers. Systematic data collection, (interviews and questionnaires) should occur in order to determine if the findings presented in this research are true for the whole of the United States and Oregon's youth corrections teachers. Finally, a system of data collection across the state of Oregon and across the United States would make comparisons possible between the three models of juvenile justice in the United States.

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Appendix A:

1. Why did you decide to teach in a correctional facility?
2. Do you have other teaching experience?
3. How long have you been with the Educational Service District?
4. How long have you been teaching?
5. How does the certification process to become a correctional teacher compare with the process for teachers who choose to work in public, private or secondary schools?
6. Do you participate in continuing education classes or recertification courses?
7. How do you handle non-compliant students?
8. Do you feel the administration is supportive of you as a teacher?
9. Are resources an issue?
10. What are your main challenges as a teacher in a secure setting?
11. Can you describe your classes for me? An individual class session?
12. What are your general impressions of the students you teach?
13. How do you define achievement with your students?
14. Do you (or have you) found camaraderie with the students?
15. Do you find yourself becoming attached to students who you have worked with for years?
How does it affect you when those students leave?
16. Do you find (or have you ever found) yourself learning from the youth?

17. Can you describe a situation in which you found yourself surprised by the youth?
18. Can you describe your typical day? How about an exceptional day?
19. What teaching methods have you found that work best for the students? Alternatively, are there any that are least successful? Have you found that by giving the youth options they are generally more amenable?
20. In situations when students transfer in and out of Hillcrest... Can you describe how this may or may not affect your curriculum?
21. How do you feel about the two year contracts?
22. Is there a high turnover rate in the OYA facilities? How about for teachers specifically?
23. How do you feel about the ESD? It is supportive? How do you feel about OYA? Is organizational commitment strong to ESD, OYA, other teachers?
24. Is there anything else you would like to speak about that I may not have mentioned?