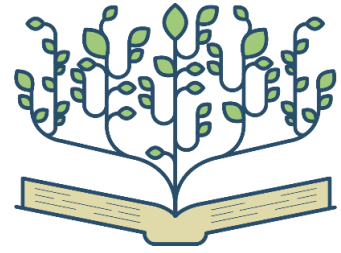


NDTAC Program Spotlight Series



Creating Higher Education Opportunities for Title I, Part D Students

One of the primary goals of Title I, Part D is to provide children and youth with the services needed to make a successful transition from institutionalization to further schooling and employment [[Sec. 1401 \(a\)\(2\)](#)]. For many students this means continuing their education beyond a high school diploma or GED. Providing these opportunities to students in neglected and delinquent programs can be challenging and requires careful planning and implementation. In this spotlight we examine three Title I, Part D funded programs across the country and explore how they have navigated these challenges to provide higher education opportunities to their students. Title I, Part D funds can be used to support students in various ways as they work towards higher education opportunities. For more information on specifically how funds can be used, please see the [Use of Funds Decision Process Tip Sheet](#).

Decker Lake and Utah Tech University Partnership



Decker Lake is a secure care facility under the supervision of the Youth Parole Authority in Utah. The facility has a maximum capacity of 30 students and under State regulations can serve students up to the age of 25. The educational program at Decker Lake is called Youth Education Support School (YESS) and is overseen by Granite School District. Creating a program that serves students up to this age was challenging because as students graduated from the high school program at the facility, they needed an educational program to further their learning and make productive use of their time in the facility. To do so, the facility partnered with [Utah Tech University](#) to create an educational program where incarcerated youth could obtain their Associates degree.

Through this program, students attend classes at Utah Tech virtually, in real time in English, math, economics, sociology, nutrition, and history. Professors live stream into the classroom and students can engage with them virtually, in real time, to participate in lectures and ask questions. In the summer, the program offers in-person sessions with instructors from the University visiting the facility.

Decker Lake staff are Education Transition Career Advocates (ETCA) who facilitate the coordination between online courses and in-person students. For example, with online security being a concern in a secure care environment, ETCAs work as an intermediary accessing the course work online and downloading it to thumb drives or printable materials so students can complete the work. They then conduct the process in reverse to help students submit assignments back to the University. The program, which is just starting its third year, is the first secure care program in Utah to have two students graduate with an Associates degree and several more in the pipeline. Additionally, the program has awarded 457 college credits to 24 students!

Jason Rosvall, the Associate Director of Granite School District, shared that the strong relationship amongst the facility, [YESS](#), and Utah Tech University has been key to the program's success. All agencies involved have a desire to serve students and the personnel involved have an understanding of the intricacies of each other's agencies. They have worked to build a culture in the program that values education and sees the transition from high school to higher education as a rite of passage.

Tatshiana Sanchez, the ETCA at Decker Lake, provides insight into the secret of their success: staff have been patient and persistent in pursuing their goals. Although developing the program took a lot of trial and error, they are committed to continuous improvement and are constantly fine-tuning what does and does not work. A major factor in the program's success is that all parties involved trust each other to do what is best for students. Tatshiana noted that Utah Tech has been amazing to work with and understand the challenges inherent in providing education in a secure care setting. She said, "it all pays off when you see students earn the general education certificate or their Associates degree... They finally start to realize they can do something more and become someone better." A student recently said to her, "I never knew this was that big of a deal until I saw my family crying and realized that they were happy tears and not the sad or disappointed tears I had given them all these years."

❖ For more information on the program, contact Jason Rosvall: jmrosvall@graniteschools.org.

Montana State Prison and Helena College



A key component to rehabilitation in prison is providing opportunities for students to further their education. Education provides life skills for the students, necessary employability skills, and a clear path forward that will help them transition to life after prison. Education can provide hope and a future for incarcerated students.

Montana State Prison recognized the need for these higher education learning opportunities and about three years ago, started accessing the [Second Chance Pell grant](#) to help students achieve this goal. The prison now offers students a

chance to earn a Certificate of Applied Science (CAS) in auto mechanics. Partnering with Helena College, the educational program allows students to attend classes synchronously at the College. After the classroom portion is complete, students enter the auto mechanics lab located on site to complete the hands-on portion of the course. CAS is a one-year program. Cohorts start with a summer session, continue through the Fall semester, and then graduate after the Spring semester. Nine students obtained their certificate in the first cohort and six more obtained certificates in the second cohort.

The program helps to address recidivism as it gives students a valuable trade they can use upon release. To date, the program has a 100% job placement rate for all students who graduated and were released. Two students even had jobs secured before their release. This success has helped to fuel commitment and collaboration between the facility, college, and Department of Labor.

Travis Anderson, the Education Services Bureau Chief for the Montana Department of Corrections, offered this advice for anyone looking to create a similar program in their state: "If you build it, they will come...build a program and make adjustments as you go along."

❖ To learn more about this program, contact Travis Anderson: travis.anderson@mt.gov.

See this news story for more information: [Montana State Prison inmates graduate from Helena College automotive program \(kxlf.com\).](https://www.kxlf.com/story/news/education/2021/03/15/montana-state-prison-inmates-graduate-helena-college-automotive-program/7048444002/)

Ventura County Juvenile Facilities and Oxnard College



In California, 2020, the [Rising Scholars Network](#) formed. This network grew out of Corrections to College California, an independent initiative that was directed to increase higher education access and success for incarcerated and previously incarcerated youths. The Rising Scholars Network provides funding and opportunities for incarcerated youth to take college level courses to start working toward their post-secondary degree. [Ventura County Juvenile Facilities](#) was quick to take advantage of this new program, partnering with [Oxnard College](#) in California to create meaningful opportunities for youth in their facility.

Through this partnership with Oxnard College, the Ventura County facility has been able to enroll students who have completed high school (approximately 1/3 of their population) into college courses offered by Oxnard. Students can choose from any of the courses that are offered and choose the degree and program of study that speaks to their interests. Student majors selected include business management, kinesiology, natural science, criminal justice, art humanities, film, and general education. Once they have chosen a program of study, students work asynchronously to complete courses, taking up to two college level courses a semester. Students can engage with their instructors through virtual office hours to ask questions and receive additional support and personnel from the college visit the facility on a weekly basis to offer support and encouragement. To date, the program has enrolled 50 students in college!

What really makes this program shine is the emphasis and support that is placed on transition. Most students are not in the facility long enough to complete a full degree. As a result, the college and facility have partnered together to offer a seamless transition for students to continue their education upon release. This starts with college staff coming into the facility and explaining to students the process for continuing education upon release. They connect students with admissions counselors, the financial aid office, and other supports they will need to transition smoothly to the on-site campus. They build relationships with the students so they know who they can reach out to and have immediate support from day one.

Going beyond relationship building, the college provides numerous tangible supports to their recently released students. On their release date, staff from the college bring students a laptop and mobile hotspot so there is no gap in their access to learning when they transition out of the facility. When students start taking actual classes on the physical campus location, they roll out the red carpet for them: students are provided with a bus pass, there is a food pantry on campus, they receive a grocery bag of food each week, two free snacks a day, and there is a closet of professional attire for job interviews that they have access to. The college staff also provide mentoring to the students while they are in the facility, so they have a familiar face to reach out to when they arrive on campus. This holistic approach has had a positive impact on students who participate in the program:

AS: "I appreciate the program because it has given me hope & motivation to do something in life and I am beyond thankful for staff who have helped me get to where I am at"

AM: "People want to move forward, sometimes you just need a push"

JT: "I like that I am working towards something and learning instead of just wasting time"

This commitment to a warm handoff and successful transition is rooted in strong relationships and collaboration between the facility personnel, college personnel, and students that ensures. The facility has built a culture of their students going to college and Oxnard College has reciprocated by mirroring this culture across their campus as an inclusive environment for all students. Staff at both programs are committed to ensuring that students do not fall through the gaps during the transition process by making frequent contact with them throughout the process and offering support.

- ❖ For more information, contact the school administrator at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities, Dr. Teresa Vega at TVega@vcoe.org.

The examples in this Spotlight highlight promising practices that support the transition of students from secure care facilities back into the community. They show that transition is not a one-time event that occurs only at discharge, it is a process that starts during the student's time in the program. By utilizing Title I, Part D funding and exploring other available federal and state funding, State coordinators and program leaders can create meaningful transitions for students that bring opportunity and hope to their lives.

For more on transition practices, please visit the following resources on the NDTAC website:

- [Voices from the Field: NDTAC Transition Toolkit Supplement](#)
- [Transition Toolkit](#)
- Webinar: [Transition Services](#)
- Webinar: [Making Transition Work](#)