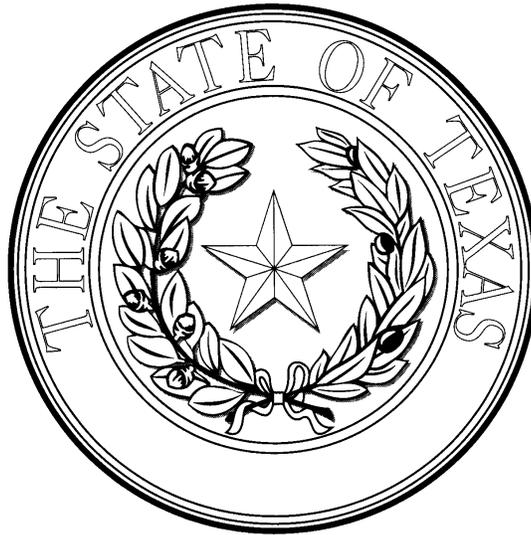


An Overview Of The Windham School District



Criminal Justice Policy Council
February 2000

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Note From The Director

In 1969 Texas created the Windham School District to provide educational programs for incarcerated offenders. This was the nation's first correctional school district. The district operates educational, vocational, and life skills training programs in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) prisons and state jails. Expenditures for these programs in fiscal year 1998 exceeded \$56 million with thousands of inmates participating in the different programs each year. This report presents an overview of Windham operations and a design for an evaluation of their programs.

In the next twelve months, the Criminal Justice Policy Council will evaluate Windham programs as mandated by the Legislature. Windham has been the subject of a number of management studies and reviews in the last ten years. While these studies have focused on operational and management issues that the Windham School District has addressed, the effectiveness of Windham in achieving its statutory goals regarding the reduction of recidivism and increased employability of inmates is largely unknown. A series of reports will be issued examining how many offenders increase their academic grade level during their incarceration, examining whether an increase in educational achievement in prison helps reduce recidivism, and whether offenders get jobs after their release in occupations related to the training provided in the Windham School District.

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Acknowledgments

The Criminal Justice Policy Council would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Windham School District in preparing this report. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Mike Morrow, Superintendent of the Windham School District for his assistance with this project, and Terry Harrelson and his staff for providing the information necessary for this study.

The Majority of Offenders in Texas Prisons Never Completed High School

Grade Level Completed	1998 On-Hand Prison Population	
	Number	Percent
Less Than High School Education	89,183	69.5%
<i>Less Than 9th Grade</i>	<i>27,746</i>	<i>21.6%</i>
<i>9th-11th Grade</i>	<i>61,437</i>	<i>47.9%</i>
High School Education or Higher	39,210	30.5%
Total*	128,393	100%

* Total does not include 3,880 offenders whose educational background information was missing/unknown

Source: *TDCJ Statistical Report FY 1998*

- 71% of the Texas adult population (as reported by the Texas Almanac) have a High School diploma compared to 31% of offenders incarcerated in Texas prisons.
- 33% of offenders incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Institutional Division (TDCJ-ID) are functionally illiterate.
 - ✓ Offenders with an Educational Achievement score below 6th grade are considered functionally illiterate..
- Two measures of educational achievement are used in this report:
 - ✓ Grade level completed indicates the last school grade completed as reported by the offender. High school completion or GED attainment are verified by Windham School District (WSD) staff. Offenders who earned a GED are included in the High School or higher category.
 - ✓ Educational Achievement score (E.A.), as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), indicates the grade level at which an inmate is functioning.

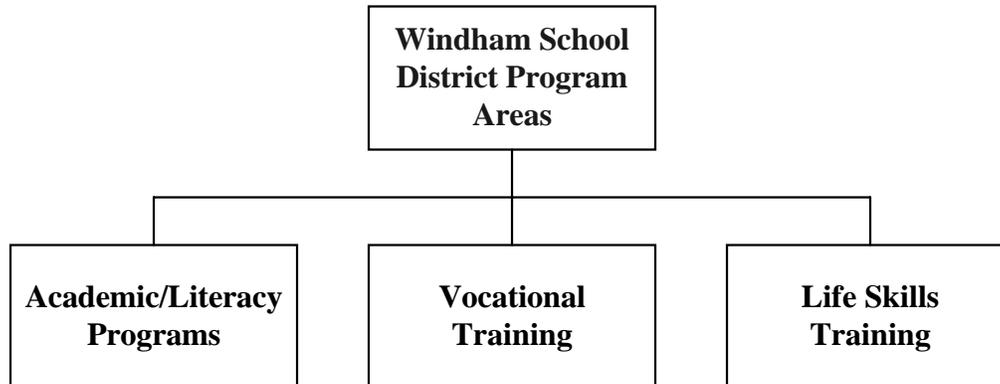
In 1969, Texas Established The Nation's First Correctional School District To Provide Educational Programs To Incarcerated Offenders

The Windham School District is:

- **Governed by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice**
- **Funded by the Texas Education Agency**
- **Operated in Texas Department of Criminal Justice Institutional and State Jail Facilities**

- The Windham School District (WSD) operates educational, vocational, and life skills training programs in TDCJ prisons and state jails throughout Texas.
- The Windham School District is a public school district monitored by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).
- The statutorily established goals of the Windham School District are to:
 - ✓ Reduce recidivism
 - ✓ Reduce the cost of confinement
 - ✓ Increase the success of former offenders in obtaining and maintaining employment
 - ✓ Provide an incentive to offenders to behave in positive ways during confinement
- Windham is funded through appropriations from the Texas Education Agency under funding formulas related to school attendance and student contact hours.
 - ✓ In FY 1998, Windham School District expenditures totaled \$56.9 million.
 - ✓ Approximately 39% of all offenders in TDCJ prisons, state jails, and Substance Abuse Punishment facilities participated in a Windham-funded program in FY 1998.
- In FY 1998, the Windham School District employed approximately 1,551 professional and paraprofessional staff members. Approximately 43% of the professional staff held a Master's degree or higher.
 - ✓ The Division of Continuing Education provides post-secondary educational and employment programs for TDCJ offenders. In FY 1999 the Continuing Education Division employed 137 staff members.

The Windham School District Provides Programming In Three Primary Areas



- The Windham School District offers a variety of educational, vocational, and life skills programs at 88 schools located in TDCJ facilities.
 - ✓ Academic/Literacy programs provide adult basic education programs for offenders functioning below the 6th grade level, secondary level education for offenders working toward a GED, and post-secondary education for offenders who have a High School diploma or GED.
 - ✓ Vocational training programs provide instruction in skills and competencies necessary for successful employment.
 - ✓ Life skills programs provide reintegration programs to prepare offenders for release to the free world.
- Eligibility for program enrollment varies by program.
 - ✓ An assessment process is used to target and appropriately place students.
 - ✓ An offender may participate in more than one Windham program during the incarceration.
 - ✓ Factors such as program capacity and offender location may impact program participation.
- Windham provides administrative support and operational guidance for TDCJ recreational programs for offenders. In FY 1999, 103 staff were employed to operate these programs.

Literacy Training Is The Core Of Windham Academic Programs

Academic / Literacy Programs, FY 1998		
Program	Number of Participants	Output Measures Reported by Windham
Adult Basic Education	58,914 participants	Average E.A. Reading Gain = 1.0 grade level
Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL)	3,470 participants in Special Education programs and 2,236 participants in ESL	Average E.A. Reading Gain = .5 grade level
Adult Secondary Level Education	6,250 students took GED test	4,290 students passed GED
Post-Secondary Education (College Academic)	7,785 participants	348 students earned an Associate Degree and 33 earned a Baccalaureate degree

- Literacy programs provide adult basic education for offenders functioning below the 6th grade level.
 - ✓ Most literacy program participants attend classes 15 hours a week.
- Special Education Programs provide functional literacy and life skills training to mentally retarded offenders and offenders with learning or other disabilities. Offenders with limited English proficiency may be placed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Title 1 programs are available to offenders 20 years of age or younger who have failed to achieve basic educational achievement levels.
- Adult Secondary Level Education courses are offered to offenders who are working toward attainment of a high school equivalency certificate (GED).
- Post-Secondary Education programs provide offenders who have High School diplomas or GEDs with opportunities to earn college credit.
 - ✓ The Division of Continuing Education, through contractual agreements with 11 junior colleges and 3 universities, provides post-secondary opportunities for offenders.

Vocational Training Programs Provide Entry-Level Industry Standards Training

Vocational Programs, FY 1998		
Program	Number of Participants	Output Measures Reported by Windham
Secondary Level Vocational Programs	16,293 participants	7,458 certificates of achievement
Apprenticeship Programs	1,084 participants	34 journeyman certificates
On-the-Job Training (OJT)	OJT credit can be earned by offenders working in TDCJ jobs	NA
Post-Secondary Vocational Programs	3,668 participants	2,019 certificates

- Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs provide occupational training and industrial certification in 40 trade areas.
 - ✓ Full length courses offer 600 hours of training focused on industry standards and certification.
 - ✓ Short courses are designed to prepare offenders for prison jobs or provide basic skills prior to release. Courses range from 45 to 200 hours of instruction.
 - ✓ Vocational students may earn industry certification in 31 trade areas. In FY 1999, over 1500 industry certificates were awarded.
- Apprenticeship training programs are offered in 32 craft, all of which are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Offenders working in TDCJ jobs can earn OJT credit in over 275 occupations. These jobs teach marketable skills, help promote good work habits, and reduce TDCJ operational costs.
- The Windham School District is working with the TDCJ-Texas Correctional Industries Program to enhance occupational training courses.
- Post-secondary vocational programs provide training in 19 course areas. Courses are normally 6 months in length and 20 semester hours of college credit are awarded for satisfactory completion.

Life Skills Training Prepares Offenders For Release From Prison

Life Skills Training, FY 1998	
Program	Number of Participants
CHANGES	21,178
Cognitive Intervention	Program offered in 36 facilities

- Windham offers life skills and problem solving programs to prepare offenders for release.
- The Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success (CHANGES) program teaches parenting skills, money management, health maintenance, and other life skills.
 - ✓ The CHANGES program is primarily offered to offenders as a pre-release program.
- The cognitive intervention program helps offenders with anger management, personal responsibility, impulse control, and overcoming criminal thinking patterns.

Factors Affecting Entry into Windham Programs

Program	Educational Level or Other Requirements	Participation
Adult Basic Education / Secondary Level Adult Education	< 6 th Grade	Priority Population
	≥ 6 th Grade and <HS or GED	Voluntary
Vocational	EA level adequate for course	Voluntary
Life Skills (CHANGES)	Within 2 years of release	Voluntary
Cognitive Intervention	Referral to program	Voluntary

- Selection to participate in Windham programs is based on the Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP) which identifies the treatment needs of offenders. Windham also conducts assessment of offenders in order to place them in appropriate Windham programs.
- Key factors that affect selection into programs include the time an offender has left in prison to participate in a program and the level of need the offender has for a program.
 - ✓ Need is based on educational achievement.
 - ✓ Offenders with less than a 6th grade EA score have priority over offenders with higher EA scores or a HS degree or GED for literacy courses.
- Other factors can impact program selection and entry. Some of these factors include:
 - ✓ Program capacity / program availability
 - ✓ Offender security classification and unit assignment

Windham School District Has Grown As Prison Population Has Increased

	1991	1998
Potential Participants	85,970	192,475
Participants	39,555	75,177
Percent Participating	46%	39%
Units	36	88
Expenditures	\$31.2 million	\$56.9 million

- From 1991 to 1998, Windham experienced a 124% increase in the number of program participants, a 144% increase in the number of units where programming is offered, and an 82% increase in expenditures.
 - ✓ From 1991 to 1998, TDCJ experienced a 188% increase in the prison population.

- Potential Participants is calculated by adding the On-Hand population at the beginning of the fiscal year and total number of admissions to TDCJ-ID, State Jail, and SAFP during the fiscal year.
 - ✓ FY 1991: On-Hand 46,324
 Admissions 39,646

 - ✓ FY 1998: On-Hand 134,648
 Admissions 57,827

Little Is Known About The Effect Of Windham Programs On Recidivism and Employability

- Windham has been the subject of a number of management studies and reviews in the last 10 years. These studies include:
 - ✓ *A Comprehensive Study of the Windham School System*, Anderson Consulting, 1990
 - ✓ *Performance Audit Report of Windham Schools and Project RIO*, Office of State Auditor, August 1990
 - ✓ *Schools Behind Bars: Windham School System and Other Prison Education Programs*, Comptroller of Public Accounts, December 1992
- While these studies have focused on operational and management issues that the Windham School District has addressed, the effectiveness of Windham in achieving its statutory goals regarding recidivism and employability is largely unknown.
- The 76th Texas Legislature attached a rider to the Criminal Justice Policy Council's appropriation directing the CJPC to evaluate the effectiveness of Windham programs in reducing recidivism.
 - ✓ *"The Criminal Justice Policy Council, with the cooperation of the Texas Education Agency and the Windham School District, shall conduct an analysis of the effect participation in Windham programs has on decreasing recidivism and an analysis of inmate academic grade level upon entrance to the program and release from incarceration. The study shall be completed and reported to the Legislature and to the Governor no later than January 1, 2001."*
- The Criminal Justice Policy Council is designing an evaluation to address the following questions (see appendix):
 - ✓ How many offenders increase their academic grade level during their incarceration?
 - ◆ How does change in academic grade level vary by offender type?
 - ✓ Does participation in Windham programs reduce recidivism?
 - ◆ Does an increase in educational achievement or earning a GED in prison reduce post-release recidivism?
 - ✓ Do offenders get jobs after their release in occupations related to the training provided in the Windham school district?
 - ◆ Does this training enhance employability and reduce recidivism?

Appendix

Evaluation of Windham School District Programs

Research Design

Evaluation of Windham School District Programs

Research Design

Introduction

The appropriation rider, noted earlier in this report, requires the CJPC to address a number of research questions regarding the Windham School District. Each of the research questions can be evaluated in a number of ways as indicated below:

- **How many offenders released from prison increase their academic grade level during their incarceration?**
 - ✓ How does change in academic grade level vary by offenders by demographic, offense, criminal history, and other variables?
 - ✓ What are the differences in offenders who do not increase academic grade level compared to those offenders who do increase academic grade level?
 - ✓ What are the differences in offenders who increase academic grade level by less than one grade versus those who increase by two, three, or more grade levels?
- **How does participation in Windham programs impact recidivism?**
 - ✓ What is the recidivism rate of offenders participating in academic, vocational, and/or life skills training programs compared to similar offenders not participating in these programs?
 - ✓ What is the recidivism rate of offenders who increased their academic grade level, earned a GED, and/or earned a vocational certification compared to similar offenders not participating in Windham programs?
 - ✓ Are there differential impacts on recidivism associated with various combinations of participation in Windham and/or TDCJ rehabilitation programs?
- **What is the relationship between participation and/or certification in Windham vocational training programs, post-release employment and recidivism?**
 - ✓ Do offenders who participate in Windham vocational training programs have increased employability (higher employment rates) after release from prison compared to similar offenders not participating in these programs?
 - ✓ Do offenders who participate in Windham vocational training programs have lower recidivism rates after release from prison compared to similar offenders not participating in these programs?
 - ✓ Do offenders get jobs in the occupations for which they received vocational certification?

-
- ✓ Is timing of entry into Windham vocational programs related to program completion rates?
 - ✓ Does timing of vocational program completion impact post-release employment?

Research Methodology

Offenders released on Parole, Mandatory Supervision, or Discharge of sentence from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Institutional Division in Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998 will be included in the study. Offenders participating in Windham programs in the TDCJ-State Jail division will not be included. The following data will be collected on each offender:

- **Data base variables:** The data base constructed for this study includes:
 - ✓ Demographic data (age, race, sex, social security number, etc.)
 - ✓ Offense
 - ✓ Criminal history
 - ✓ Time served
 - ✓ Recidivism risk score
 - ✓ SASSI substance abuse screening score
 - ✓ Windham attendance records
 - ✓ Windham academic / vocational participation data
 - ✓ GED / Vocational certification
 - ✓ Highest grade attained outside TDCJ
 - ✓ IQ score
 - ✓ Admission EA and Highest EA score
 - ✓ TDCJ rehabilitation program participation

- **Outcome Measures:**

Each offender in the sample will be tracked for two years. Outcome measures will be calculated using the following definitions:

- ✓ Return to prison or state jail within 2 years of release for a new offense or supervision violation
- ✓ Post-release employment as measured by the Wage Record data base of the Texas Workforce Commission
- ✓ Survey of parole officers to collect post-release employment and occupational data of releasees who earned a vocational certificate in TDCJ.

Example of Analytical Methodology

A number of factors are associated with the outcome of offenders released from prison. These factors, such as age of the offender or offense committed, can confound the outcomes of offenders participating in Windham programs. In addition, offenders also participate in other TDCJ-ID programs that may affect recidivism. It is necessary to control for these factors in order to identify the contribution of Windham programs on recidivism independent of other programs and factors.

To the extent possible, the design for this study will control for these other factors. Other factors, such as motivation to participate in program cannot be controlled for. Only an experimental design, using random assignment to Windham programs, could control for those factors and that is not possible in this study.

The following design exemplifies the approach that will be utilized in this study to control for the factors detailed above. To the extent possible, offenders participating in Windham programs will be compared to similar offenders not participating in Windham.

Example Controls for Recidivism and Program Factors

Recidivism Factors to Control: “Offenders Similar”

	Windham	Non-Windham
High SASSI Score	X	X
Medium Recidivism Risk	X	X
Age 30 and older	X	X

Program Factors: Offenders “Not Similar”

Windham GED	X	O
PRTC	X	O
CHANGES	X	O
Two Year Recidivism Rate	?	?

Summary

The Criminal Justice Policy Council will conduct an analysis of the effect of Windham participation on academic achievement in TDCJ-ID and the effect of participation in Windham programs on post-release outcomes and recidivism. Where possible, the analysis will control for other factors that might impact outcomes in an effort to isolate the effects of Windham on recidivism and other post-release outcomes.