

REPORT OF THE  
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL  
TO THE  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE

819

A REVIEW OF THE  
CALIFORNIA YOUTH AUTHORITY'S  
EDUCATION PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 1978



# Joint Legislative Audit Committee

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

## California Legislature



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December 4, 1978

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The Honorable Members of the Senate and the  
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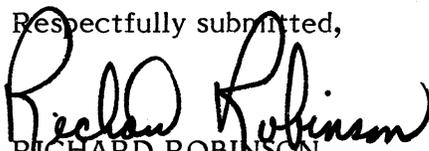
Members of the Legislature:

Your Joint Legislative Audit Committee respectfully submits the Auditor General's report on the California Youth Authority (CYA) education program. The program provides academic and vocational education for wards at each facility. CYA's present institutionalized ward population is 4,190. During 1977-78, the total CYA education budget was \$10,878,082.

The report identifies several deficiencies in the CYA education program. The educational diagnostic and placement process is not adequate for assessing wards' educational needs. The academic program does not address the particular needs of the substantial number of educationally handicapped or limited-English speaking wards. The vocational program is not responsive to labor market needs and does not place sufficient emphasis on job placement. Moreover, CYA lacks a comprehensive program evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of its education programs. Due to these and other deficiencies, the Auditor General is recommending specific corrective action to improve the education program's efficiency and effectiveness.

The auditors are Dr. Joan S. Bissell, Supervising Auditor; Jeffrey L. Mikles, Associate Auditor; and Eileen Kraskouskas, Associate Auditor.

Respectfully submitted,

  
RICHARD ROBINSON  
Chairman, Joint Legislative  
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Assemblyman, 72nd District

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## SUMMARY

The California Youth Authority (CYA) is required to provide academic and vocational education for wards at each facility. Education is considered an integral part of the total rehabilitation program and is intended to assist wards in successfully returning to the community as productive citizens. As of June 1978, CYA's ward population was 4,190. During 1977-78, the total CYA education budget was \$10,878,082.

Although the CYA education program operates under difficult conditions, the Department could improve the program's effectiveness in: ward diagnosis and placement, academic and vocational programs and program evaluation,

We found that:

- CYA's educational diagnostic and placement process does not adequately assess special ward educational needs such as learning handicaps and allows institutional placements to be made without adequate information. As a result, there is no assurance that ward needs are being identified and addressed. This can result in an ineffective use of resources in all phases of the education program because diagnosis is the basis for subsequent educational programming (page 22).

- CYA's academic program does not address the particular needs of the educationally handicapped and limited- and non-English speaking wards as mandated. In addition, staff are not trained to meet ward's specialized needs. As a result, academic program resources directed toward the treatment of CYA wards may be used ineffectively (page 30)
  
- CYA's vocational program is not responsive to labor market needs. The program includes limited job development and placement activities, but does not include vocational counseling or ward follow-up activities. Consequently, the vocational program may not be providing wards with relevant job knowledge and employable skills. Data for 1977 indicate that at the time of discharge, only 115 of 3,071 wards were employed in the field for which they were trained. However, over 1,000 wards were employed in other fields (page 35)
  
- CYA does not have a comprehensive program evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of its education programs. The present evaluation system lacks performance standards and has not been used to systematically evaluate the education program on an ongoing basis. Effective education programs may not be identified and disseminated, and ineffective

programs may be allowed to continue, causing potential inefficiencies in the use of available funds (page 41).

To address these problems we recommend that CYA:

- Develop a procedure for diagnosing wards' academic and vocational needs that is sufficient to serve as a basis for planning wards' educational programs and for targeting educational resources effectively (page 28)
- Improve the academic program so that it is responsive to the special needs of CYA wards, including those who are educationally handicapped or limited- or non-English speaking (page 33)
- Develop a vocational education master plan to ensure that the vocational program is responsive to labor market needs and emphasizes job placement of wards (pages 39 & 40)
- Establish an evaluation system to assess program effectiveness, which includes ongoing comprehensive data collection based on systemwide performance standards and objectives (page 45).

Furthermore, we recommend that CYA identify assistance needed from the Department of Education, Employment Development Department and other state agencies to implement these recommendations.

## INTRODUCTION

In response to a resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, we examined the ward education program of the California Youth Authority (CYA). The audit is intended to provide the Legislature with a description of CYA educational programs and their effectiveness. The audit was conducted under authority vested in the Auditor General by Section 10527 of the Government Code.

The purpose of the California Youth Authority is:

...to protect society more effectively by substituting for retributive punishment methods of training and treatment directed toward the correction and rehabilitation of young persons found guilty of public offenses... (Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 1700)

CYA consists of five branches. The Institutions and Camps Branch is responsible for carrying out CYA's mandate to provide academic and vocational education for wards at each institution. (Welfare and Institutions Code, Sections 1004 and 1122.)

The Educational Services Unit within that branch provides technical assistance to the education programs which are conducted in five conservation camps, eight institutions and seven parole centers. Four reception center-clinics assess wards' educational background. As of June 1978, CYA's institutionalized population consisted of 4,004 males and 186 females.

## Education Program Elements and Resources

Education is considered an integral part of the total rehabilitation program and is designed to help wards return successfully to the community as productive citizens. The education program includes academic and vocational elements. Academic elements presently provided are: remedial education, developmental education (preparation for high school graduation), junior college, physical education and recreation and library services.

The 1977-78 state-funded education program budget is approximately \$9 million, representing 8.5 percent of CYA's rehabilitation services funds and 6.3 percent of the Department's estimated total budget. Rehabilitation services consist of diagnosis, care and control, and treatment which includes education. Over the past four years, the total education budget has remained essentially constant while the overall CYA General Fund appropriation has increased.\* Within the total education allocation, the academic and vocational education budgets have remained relatively stable in relation to each other. The academic program has received a significantly larger proportion of funds than the vocational program. Table 1 on page 7 summarizes CYA's overall budget, the education budget and the academic and vocational program allocations over the past four years.

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\* The CYA's educational funding allocation is based on a formula of one classroom teacher for each 15 wards. The formula assumes a ten percent absence among wards.

TABLE 1  
CYA EDUCATION PROGRAM BUDGET  
(GENERAL FUND)

	<u>1974-75</u>	<u>1975-76</u>	<u>1976-77</u>	<u>1977-78</u>
Total CYA Budget	\$99,777,175	\$110,463,519	\$118,674,303	\$143,076,151 <sup>a/</sup>
Rehabilitation Services	77,245,063	86,241,000	96,251,516	104,542,629 <sup>a/</sup>
Total CYA Education <sup>b/</sup>	8,502,664	8,470,423	8,437,601	8,946,049
% of Rehabilitation Services	11.01%	9.82%	8.77%	8.56%
% of Total CYA Budget	8.52%	7.67%	7.11%	6.25%
Academic <sup>c/</sup>	3,595,198	3,518,725	3,443,141	3,393,845
% of Education Total	42.28%	41.53%	40.81%	37.94%
Vocational <sup>c/</sup>	2,200,608	2,126,123	2,051,639	2,113,992
% of Education Total	25.88%	25.10%	24.32%	23.63%
Additional Education Expenses <sup>d/</sup>	2,706,858	2,825,575	2,942,821	3,438,212
Number of Wards	4,514	4,622	4,069	4,190

<sup>a/</sup> Estimated.

<sup>b/</sup> Includes academic and vocational salaries, recreation and support activities, benefits, operating expenses.

<sup>c/</sup> Salaries and operating expenses only.

<sup>d/</sup> Includes recreation and support salaries, benefits and other expenses.

SOURCE: Governor's Budget, CYA (unaudited).

The CYA education program has also received funding from a number of federal programs. These are summarized in Table 2 below. Combining federal and General Fund support, the total CYA education budget in 1977-78 was \$10,878,082. Total federal funds for 1978-79 are expected to increase somewhat as pending grants are approved.

TABLE 2  
CYA EDUCATION PROGRAM BUDGET (TOTAL)

	<u>1977-78</u>	<u>1978-79 (Projected)</u>
General Fund	\$ 8,946,049	\$10,044,223
Federal Funds	1,932,033	1,863,477
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I	(1,448,082)	(1,448,082)
Right-to-Read Program	(92,079)	(87,675)
Vocational Education	(245,023)	(245,023)
Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA)	(138,916)	(73,041)
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title IV-B	<u>(7,933)</u>	<u>(9,656)</u>
Total	<u>\$10,878,082</u>	<u>\$11,907,700</u>

SOURCE: CYA (unaudited).

Scope of Audit

Our audit included an examination of the following components of the educational program: ward diagnosis; academic and vocational training; staff preparation; and CYA's ongoing procedures for evaluating education programs.

We interviewed CYA staff and reviewed data in the Camps and Institutions Branch and made site visits to two reception center-clinics, two conservation camps, all eight institutions and four parole centers. We interviewed administrators, program coordinators, teachers and wards. In addition, we examined pertinent CYA reports and surveyed national research studies on juvenile delinquency.

#### Audit Limitations

The major emphasis of the audit was on the institutional and camp programs because educational programs in the reception center-clinics and parole offices are limited in scope. General methods of rehabilitative treatment are outside the scope of educational programs, and we did not analyze their effectiveness. In addition, we did not evaluate specific curriculum content or teacher performance but focused on the education program's overall effectiveness.

Studies of incarcerated youth consistently have shown a long history of school failure; or, if not failure, a history of poor achievement and adjustment from the earliest years in school. The wards are frequently academically retarded, lack educational motivation, have poor work and study habits and have few employable skills. Many also have psychological disorders or anti-social behavior patterns. Moreover, factors such as the extent and severity of the ward's learning problems and the short time a

ward is confined may make it difficult to achieve demonstrable results. The difficult conditions under which these programs operate must be considered in evaluating their effectiveness.

## THE CYA EDUCATION PROGRAM

The first section of this report describes the CYA education program and the second presents the audit results. The program description includes the following areas:

- Background information
- Characteristics of the CYA population
- Overall educational program conditions
- Academic and vocational program components.

The Education Services Unit within the Institutions and Camps Branch provides direction and technical assistance to all of CYA's education programs. The unit's role is only advisory in nature, however, because there is no uniform department education program and the unit has no line authority over the autonomously operated facilities. Composed of three state-funded professional positions and nine federally funded professional positions, the unit provides assistance to approximately 360 professional staff members at camps and institutions.

### Characteristics of the CYA Ward Population

The ward population has changed significantly since CYA's inception in 1941. Where once CYA operated schools and camps for juveniles, it now operates institutions and camps which serve a larger proportion of young adults. The current population is older,

more sophisticated in terms of criminal history and more violent. A high percentage of wards are school dropouts and have a history of unemployment when first committed to CYA. Table 3 summarizes the changes in the ward population from 1966 to 1978.

TABLE 3  
CHARACTERISTICS OF  
FIRST COMMITMENTS TO CYA

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1978</u>
Average Age at Commitment	16.3 years	18.6 years
Court of Commitment		
Juvenile	75.5%	56.4%
Adult	24.5%	43.6%
Violent Offenses	15.4%	50.1%
School Dropouts	N/A	54.1% <sup>a/</sup>
Unemployed	N/A	44.2% <sup>a/</sup>

a/ 1977 data.

SOURCE: CYA (Unaudited).

Although the ward population is older, CYA educational options have changed little. The ratio of academic program slots to vocational training/work experience slots (which are more oriented toward older wards) has been relatively stable.

CYA wards present a wide variety of achievement levels and a broad spectrum of educational needs. In 1977 the average reading level at entrance was the seventh grade (7.0); the average math level was the sixth grade seventh month (6.7). The mean grade level of last public school enrollment was 10.7 for males and 10.3 for females. Ten percent of the wards were last enrolled in the ninth grade or below; the highest 10 percent were in their last year of high school; and 54 percent were school dropouts.

The U. S. General Accounting Office recently reported that approximately 26 percent of juvenile delinquents tested in institutions have primary learning disabilities and approximately 51 percent have secondary learning disabilities. (Primary learning disabilities involve deficiencies in learning processes having to do with perception, integration, and verbal and nonverbal attending. Secondary learning disabilities result from emotional and behavioral difficulties and other problems which interfere with the learning experience.)

The Youth Authority conservatively estimates that 28.5 percent of its wards have learning disabilities or other educational handicaps. Also, approximately 30 percent of the CYA ward population is Spanish surnamed and potentially limited- or non-English speaking. (There may be overlap among these two groups).

Overall Educational  
Program Conditions

The average commitment time in a CYA institution is approximately 12 months at an approximate total annual cost of \$18,600 per ward. Education is viewed primarily as a positive way to occupy wards during their confinement. CYA administrators stated, however, that security has priority over education in the institutional setting.

The principal education programs at CYA are offered in the camps and institutions. There are five camps jointly administered by CYA and the Department of Forestry which offer a voluntary education program staffed by one teacher at each location. Classes are held in the evenings because wards work during the day. Wards assigned to camps are low security risks and frequently first-time commitments to CYA.

The majority of wards and education staff are assigned to the institutions. The academic and vocational courses offered vary by institution. More vocational courses are available at institutions where the wards are older and have been committed for more serious crimes. Institutions with younger wards have more academic programs and a few prevocational options. The following table illustrates the mix of academic and vocational teachers among faculty.

TABLE 4  
TEACHING STAFF AT CYA CAMPS AND INSTITUTIONS

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Wards</u>	<u>Mean Age</u>	<u>Academic Faculty</u>	<u>Vocational Faculty</u>
Fred C. Nelles	368	16.5	25	8
O. H. Close	353	16.8	22	7
El Paso De Robles	395	17.9	19	3
Karl Holton	335	18.5	24	4
Camps	350	19.2	5	0
Preston	399	19.2	22	12
DeWitt Nelson	332	19.4	10	6
Ventura	181	19.4	25	7
Youth Training School	<u>738</u>	<u>19.6</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>44</u>
TOTAL	<u>3,451<sup>a/</sup></u>	<u>18.5</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>91</u>

a/ Excludes reception center-clinics.

SOURCE: CYA.

Except for certain work programs and the voluntary program at the Youth Training School, participation in the education program at institutions is mandatory. Staff report that, because they have teaching and security responsibilities in their classrooms, they experience a high degree of stress. Teachers in institutions generally are responsible for teaching several subjects on a variety of levels during each class period. Most develop their own curricula independently.

Although educational leave is available on a regular basis for career development, many teachers expressed a desire for more in-service training and opportunities for exchange with staff at other CYA institutions. CYA administrators stated that in general, there are limited opportunities for professional training directly related to teaching incarcerated juvenile delinquents.

#### Academic Program Component

The academic education program has five major elements: (1) remedial education; (2) developmental education oriented toward high school graduation; (3) junior college; (4) physical education; and (5) library services. The latter two are available to all wards without regard to educational placement. Placement in remedial, developmental or postsecondary education is based on results on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).

Wards who score below the sixth grade level are placed in remedial math, language and reading courses. The remedial education program is federally and state funded. The federally funded portion is an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I project targeted for the "neediest of the needy" wards. It is intended to supplement educational programs offered by the State and is funded at \$1,448,000 per year. The ESEA remedial program has a multi-cultural education component and a career awareness component.

The remedial education program is presently supplemented by a federally funded Right-to-Read Program which is operating at camps, institutions and one parole center in Northern California. It is administered on a one-to-one basis and uses community volunteers and peer tutors.\* The program, currently in its third and final year, has been funded annually at a level of \$92,000.

The developmental education program focuses on completing the requirements for high school graduation either by giving wards the opportunity to earn high school credits or to prepare for the high school equivalency examination. All courses necessary for a high school diploma are offered.

The junior college program is entirely state funded and is offered at five institutions in conjunction with nearby junior colleges. Requirements for participation vary by institution from reading at the eighth grade level to the tenth grade level. In 1977, eight percent of CYA wards participated. Since commitment time is short, few wards receive AA degrees while at CYA.\*\*

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\* Volunteers and peer tutors have also been used in some other education programs at CYA facilities.

\*\* Chapter 665, Statutes of 1977, required the California Postsecondary Education Commission to study the scope of current inmate and ex-offender postsecondary education programs in California correctional institutions; to assess the need to expand current programs or begin new programs; and to develop a plan for possible expansion of programs. Completion of the study is projected for May 1979.

The CYA has developed a Survival Education program that supplements the regular school curriculum. The program includes Survival Economics, Survival Education and Job Survival Skills. The Survival Education program has been designed to give wards basic adult functioning competencies, e.g., filing income taxes, opening and maintaining bank accounts. Parole agents stated that these two nontraditional courses should be stressed at institutions because they are more responsive to the needs of an older ward returning to the community. A Job Survival Skills pilot program is being field tested at the Preston School of Industry and the Youth Training School in an effort to assist wards in locating, selecting, securing and maintaining jobs.

#### Vocational Program Component

The vocational education component consists of two program elements--prevocational and vocational. The prevocational component comprises about 25 percent and the vocational program element about 75 percent of the total vocational education program cost.

The prevocational courses are oriented toward younger students. The program focuses on discovering and developing skills in working with tools, acquiring elementary technology and shaping specific vocational and avocational aptitudes and interest. Depending on the facility, course placement is based either on ward interest or the ward's living unit and the shop assigned to it. With the exception of the camps, prevocational classes generally last one period, with the ward spending the rest of the day in a remedial or secondary program. The camp work experience programs are also

prevocational in nature; the wards work a full day on conservation-related projects administered by the Department of Forestry.

Vocational courses are designed to provide wards with relevant job knowledge, appropriate work habits and salable skills. These courses are oriented toward older wards who generally spend half or a full day in one course. The program emphasis is on technical trade skill development and application. Course placement criteria vary among institutions and range from ward interest only to a composite evaluation of ward interest, age and achievement scores. According to a recent Department of Finance report, an important consideration in designing programs is the need to keep wards occupied. To some extent, vocational education classes exist to keep wards busy and thereby reduce the probability of undesirable behavior. All CYA vocational education instructors are required to be journeymen in their respective teaching fields. Based on their background, the teachers are supposed to structure their classes to be relevant to labor market needs.

#### Work Experience Programs

Work experience programs are reported to benefit the wards, institutions and the State. Wards develop their skills by working on projects such as automobile repair, plumbing and welding. In addition, wards receive credit toward high school graduation and, in some instances, receive pay for work completed.

CYA staff report that the institutions benefit from the maintenance services provided by the wards, and the State achieves savings through work programs such as printing and conservation projects. For example, the Preston printing shop prints all of Preston's forms and many of CYA's forms. A Forestry Department superintendent estimated that during fiscal year 1976-77 the wards in his conservation camp alone saved the State in excess of \$543,000 in labor costs.

#### Job Placement Programs

CYA conducts specific job placement programs at three of the eight institutions and at the two parole centers. Of all the institutions, the Youth Training School (YTS) appears to place the greatest program emphasis on job placement. YTS conducts a job development program which attempts to place a ward in a job near his home using the skills he learned in the institution. During fiscal year 1977-78, 210 wards participated in the job development program and 104 were placed. In addition, YTS participates in an Employment Development Department (EDD), Employment Preparation and Placement Project which also includes Ventura School and DeWitt Nelson Training Center. The project is jointly administered by CYA and EDD and consists of job seeking workshops in the institutions and EDD job agents in the field. Two parole activities, the San Francisco Project and the Oakland Jobs Program, also conduct job seeking workshops and make placements. Placement data were unavailable.

A factor which may limit the success of CYA's vocational education program is the overall youth unemployment problem. Because more than 62 percent of the ward population is classified as nonwhite, the unemployment problem is even more significant. In 1975, the unemployment rate for Caucasians between the ages of 16 and 19 was 18 percent and the unemployment rate for nonwhites of the same age group was 36 percent. Due to their arrest records, it would be expected that the unemployment rate for CYA parolees would be higher than that of their peers.

Relationship with State  
Department of Education

In the past, the relationship between CYA and the Department of Education has been minimal. Although the Welfare and Institutions Code specifies that CYA education programs are subject to the approval of the Department of Education, the Department has not taken responsibility for approving such programs. Currently, the relationship between the two agencies is being formally defined because P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975\*, makes the Department of Education responsible for the general supervision of all education programs for handicapped pupils within CYA beginning September 1978.

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\*20 U.S.C. Sec. 1401 et seq.

## AUDIT RESULTS

### NEED FOR IMPROVED ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL DIAGNOSIS AS A BASIS FOR EDUCATION PROGRAM PLACEMENT

The California Youth Authority lacks an effective and efficient diagnostic system for assessing wards' educational needs. One diagnostic test used is inappropriate for CYA wards, while another test is administered to a portion of the wards but is not used for placement purposes. Placements are made without adequate diagnosis and without complete information on educational background. As a result, there is no assurance that educational needs are being identified and addressed. Failure to provide a thorough diagnosis and to appropriately place newly committed wards entails potential ineffective use of resources in all phases of the education program and inhibits its overall effectiveness.

#### Diagnostic Instruments

At the CYA reception center-clinics only one standardized screening test is administered to all wards, the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). The test generates scores, stated as grade levels from one to twelve, in the basic skills of reading, arithmetic and language. The results of the test are used to determine: (1) if further diagnostic testing will take place at the reception center; (2) if wards will be placed in remedial or developmental (i.e., high school graduation) classes when assigned to education programs at camps and institutions; and (3) which wards will be administered a vocational aptitude test battery.

Wards with reading scores on the TABE below the third grade-eighth month are referred to staff psychologists. The psychologists administer predominantly psychological tests to determine if low achievement is based on identifiable psychological factors. A psychologist at one reception center-clinic estimated that approximately 10 percent of all wards at his facility fall into this group.

Wards who score above the sixth grade level on the TABE and who are 16 years or older are administered the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), a vocational aptitude test. Approximately 40 percent of CYA wards take this test.

The Southern Reception Center-Clinic administers a Spanish diagnostic test (BARSIT) for limited- and non-English speaking wards who are unable to take the TABE. However, the Northern Reception Center-Clinic does no specialized testing for this group of wards.

#### Diagnosis and Placement Procedures

The four CYA reception center-clinics serve as intake points for all commitments and as testing centers. During a four-week period a standard diagnostic report is developed for each ward.

An educational profile is one part of the report. The test results of the TABE and the GATB and transcripts from previous schools attended are the major components of the educational profile. A CYA study concluded that more than 50 percent of new commitments are placed in educational programs prior to receipt of transcripts from schools attended previously.

Ward placement is decided at a formal hearing. The entire report, including the staff's recommendation for treatment, is presented to a panel which represents the Youth Authority Board. The Board representatives generally concur with staff recommendations and set commitment terms. A ward's placement is based on his crime, maturity level and needs.

The need for accurate diagnosis as a basis for appropriate placement has been emphasized by recent court decisions and legislation. In *Nelson vs. Heyne*, the court upheld that wards are entitled to the right to treatment predicated upon evaluation of the wards' needs through a diagnostic process. (7th Circuit United States Court of Appeals.) In *Lau vs. Nichols*, the Supreme Court ruled that public schools receiving federal funds must establish programs to deal with student language problems. The Office for Civil Rights interprets that ruling as a requirement for CYA to identify and provide instruction to limited- and non-English speaking students. In addition, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) requires the

identification of all pupils who are educationally handicapped and a comprehensive assessment of each such pupil's education needs in an individualized education program\*.

#### Inadequacies in Ward Diagnosis

The two basic educational tests used in ward diagnosis, the TABE and GATB, are not designed to identify learning disabilities and educational handicaps--problems which have a potentially high rate of occurrence among CYA wards. CYA officials also stated that the Department lacks trained staff to conduct routine screening and to identify or conduct appropriate assessments for wards who have learning disabilities or who are limited- or non-English speaking.

In addition, the TABE is inappropriate for CYA's general population. It is a battery which was originally designed for elementary school children. The test contains no data on reliability and validity. A critical review\*\* states that a test based on middle-class elementary school children is an inappropriate literacy test for disadvantaged, semiliterate and illiterate people. The test has a standard deviation of two grades. Therefore, if the score indicates reading at the sixth grade level, the results are accurate plus or minus two grade levels; the ward could be reading anywhere between the fourth and the eighth grade levels. Furthermore, only raw scores are placed in the ward's educational profile. The scores

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\*The requirement pertains to pupils through the age of 18 beginning September 1, 1978 and through the age of 21 beginning September 1, 1980.

\*\*O.K. Buros, Mental Measurements Yearbook, pp. 60-62

are not interpreted in light of the ward's educational background; such an interpretation could modify the meaning of test data and yield a more accurate estimate of ward achievement and learning potential. Staff psychologists at the Northern and Southern Reception Center-Clinics considered the TABE inadequate for CYA needs,

CYA's use of the GATB, the vocational aptitude test, represents an inefficient and ineffective use of funds for two reasons. First, approximately 60 percent of new commitments do not qualify to take the test because they do not read at the sixth grade level. Second, the test results are not interpreted for placement into vocational programs. Third, as with the TABE, only raw scores-- which are of little use to educational staff--are included in the educational profile. It is ineffective and inefficient to use resources to administer a vocational test which can be given only to a portion of the wards, and the results of which are not interpreted for placement purposes. A nonverbal version of the test (Nonverbal Aptitude Test Battery) is available, but is not routinely administered,

It is important to note CYA's efforts to address one of the problems we have discussed. CYA presently does not have specific diagnostic procedures suited to assessment of wards with educational handicaps, and such procedures must be developed to comply with new federal mandates (under Public Law 94-142). Consequently, CYA and the Department of Education have been working together to do so. CYA has developed a proposal for a centralized assessment center to deal with handicapped wards and to secure federal funding through the Department of Education for such a facility.

Although this center would provide for an assessment of wards with educational handicaps, it would not address the broader problem of CYA's inadequate procedures for diagnosing all wards' educational needs.

Failure to accurately diagnose wards' needs can lead to ineffective use of resources not only at the time of commitment, but throughout the commitment period because wards may be engaged in inappropriate programs. In addition, a recent U. S. General Accounting Office report\* linking learning disabilities with delinquency suggests that incorrect diagnosis and placement may entangle wards in a cycle of academic frustration, which may contribute to juvenile delinquency. The report states that evidence indicates that a correlation between children experiencing learning problems and those demonstrating delinquent behavior patterns. Psychologists have shown that continued school failure often results in the student developing a negative self-concept and a high level of frustration resulting in negative behavior.

#### CONCLUSION

CYA's current diagnostic and placement procedures do not effectively identify the educational needs of the CYA ward population. Several factors contribute to this problem. First, the diagnostic instruments used are inadequate. Second, the current battery of diagnostic

\*U.S. General Accounting Office, Learning Disabilities: The Link to Delinquency Should Be Determined, But Schools Should Do More Now, March, 1977.

tests does not include routine screening for educational learning problems which have a potentially high rate of occurrence in the CYA population. Third, the staff members who administer diagnostic instruments are inadequately trained to interpret instruments currently administered. Fourth, placement decisions are made without adequate information. As a result, there is no assurance that the wards' educational needs are being identified as a basis for treatment in CYA's educational program.

#### RECOMMENDATION

To increase the effectiveness of the diagnostic process, we recommend:

- The Education Services Unit and psychologists from the reception center-clinics should jointly identify and implement a new comprehensive diagnostic process which includes:
  - (a) An achievement test which is appropriate for delinquent youth and sufficiently accurate to serve as a basis for placement
  - (b) A vocational aptitude test which can be administered to all CYA wards

- (c) Routine screening to identify wards with learning disabilities followed by in-depth assessment of such learning disabilities and development of required individualized education plans
  - (d) Routine screening to identify limited- and non-English speaking wards and appropriate assessment to determine their educational needs
- The superintendents of the reception center-clinics should (a) provide training in test administration and interpretation for staff members who administer routine diagnostic instruments and (b) pursue alternative ways to obtain information on wards' educational backgrounds prior to placement
  - The Education Services Unit should ensure in-depth assessment and the development of individualized education plans for educationally handicapped wards.

NEED TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS  
RESPONSIVENESS TO WARDS' SPECIALIZED  
EDUCATION NEEDS

The California Youth Authority has not designed and implemented an academic program which addresses specialized education needs as mandated by federal legislation. Because of inadequate assessment of wards' educational needs and the lack of bilingual teachers and staff trained in special education, bilingual and educationally handicapped wards have not been placed in academic programs responsive to their needs. As a result, resources directed toward the education of wards may be used ineffectively.

Legal Requirements

Several statutory mandates govern the CYA education programs. The Welfare and Institutions Code requires that CYA provide for the education and training of its wards and direct its power toward correcting their faults\*. Two federal laws impose specific requirements concerning wards with special needs. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) requires the development and implementation of an individualized education program for all pupils who have learning handicaps. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as interpreted in the Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court case) requires that necessary services be provided to enable limited- and non-English speaking wards to participate in the instructional program.

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\*Section 1104, 1120 et. seq. 1760, 1768.

CYA staff estimate that the number of handicapped wards with primary and/or secondary learning disabilities ranges from 28.5 percent to 75 percent of their population. The large range in the estimate results from the problems of accurately identifying educationally handicapped pupils. Estimates vary widely as a function of definitions used and resultant incidence rates for particular conditions (e.g., learning disabilities, speech handicaps).

Inadequacies in CYA  
Academic Education Program

Apart from a 50 percent state-funded full-time school psychologist assigned to each institution, staff and teaching appointments do not require training in special education as a prerequisite for employment. Most CYA teachers have received little or no training in special education for handicapped students and are generally unprepared to design and carry out individualized education programs for these pupils as mandated by P.L. 94-142.

CYA has not yet developed and implemented appropriate educational programs for educationally handicapped wards. In its recent compliance review at two institutions, the state Department of Education identified this problem although it also concluded that CYA was moving toward compliance with requirements of P.L. 94-142. Programmatic requirements of the law became effective on September 1, 1978.

Similarly, no specific educational program, curriculum materials or general staff training have been developed to meet the needs of wards who are limited- or non-English speaking. This group is estimated to represent as much as 30 percent of the CYA ward population. Systemwide there are few bilingual teachers, but CYA is actively trying to hire qualified minority staff. Where there are bilingual staff members, they have been selected to work with limited- and non-English speaking wards (in addition to carrying out their regular duties).

Failure to provide academic programs in compliance with federal laws can entail loss of federal support. For example, a finding of noncompliance with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act could mean loss of CYA's federal funds. Failure to comply with P. L. 94-142 could entail loss of ESEA Title I education funds amounting to \$1,448,000.

### CONCLUSION

The academic portion of the education program is not responsive to the specialized education needs of the CYA population. CYA is required under state law to provide for the education of all wards and is mandated by federal legislation to provide special services to wards who have educational handicaps or who are limited- or non-English speaking. Studies show that there is a potentially high rate of both of these groups in the CYA ward population.

The program has not been developed to accommodate the needs of its recipients because there has not been an adequate ongoing diagnostic process. Also, the institutional staffs lack faculty members who are bilingual or trained in special education. As a result, resources supporting education for wards with special needs may be used ineffectively.

#### RECOMMENDATION

To facilitate the development of educational programs which are more responsive to the specialized academic needs of CYA wards, we recommend:

- The Education Services Unit should establish procedures to conduct an ongoing, systemwide assessment of academic program needs based on data collected during the ward diagnostic process
- The Education Services Unit and the Supervisors of Education should jointly develop a CYA special education master plan which includes:
  - (a) Development of training programs for current teaching staff to implement individualized education programs for handicapped pupils

(b) A determination of necessary resources and programmatic changes (e.g., reallocation of staff; centralized location of special education programs) to implement P.L. 94-142

(c) Development of curriculum materials for educationally handicapped wards,

- The Education Services Unit should ensure that curricula for limited- and non-English speaking wards are available at all institutions,

NEED TO IMPROVE VOCATIONAL PROGRAM'S  
RESPONSIVENESS TO LABOR MARKET NEEDS

CYA's vocational program is not responsive to labor market needs and does not include adequate counseling, job placement and follow-up activities. In addition, there is little coordination between the CYA vocational programs in camps and institutions and the parole offices. As a result, the vocational program may not be providing wards with relevant job knowledge and salable skills.

Vocational Education Standards

The state Department of Education allocated \$248,000 of the \$50.2 million of federal vocational education funds appropriated to California in 1977-78 to provide vocational education for disadvantaged students under CYA's jurisdiction. A condition for receiving the funds is that CYA's vocational program must comply with the federal Vocational Education Act of 1976\* and the California Five-Year Plan for Vocational Education. The Act requires that students have access to vocational training or retraining "which is realistic in the light of actual or anticipated opportunities for gainful employment...." The rationale is to provide students with marketable skills. Moreover, program standards require the following:

- Program planning shall utilize occupational advisory committees with input from employers, labor and management and current job market data

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\*As amended by the Education Amendments of 1976.

- Learning experiences should be of sufficient length to enable students to develop minimum competencies required for employment
- Vocational counseling and guidance shall be provided
- Job placement services shall be provided
- Follow-up studies shall be conducted to determine if students are placed in the field they were trained in and if employer requirements are met.

#### Lack of Adequate Program Planning

Current vocational program planning is not responsive to labor market and changing ward needs and does not accommodate the average 12-month incarceration period. As a result, wards are frequently unable to develop employable skills. Data for 1977 indicate that 48 percent of the wards discharged from parole were unskilled. Further, only 6 of the 24 trades offered by CYA are considered to provide good job opportunities based on job opportunity statistics presented in the Employment Development Department's (EDD) publication California Manpower 1975-1980. CYA does not have an active occupational advisory committee to provide employer input needed to determine curriculum relevance to labor market needs. However, in recognition of these and other problems, CYA is currently contracting with a private firm to conduct a comprehensive vocational needs assessment. One of the firm's responsibilities is to determine skill requirements for entry level employment.

Many of the vocational offerings provided within the relatively short period of confinement are for the most part prevocational in nature. Program emphasis is on job exploration and the development of work habits and job survival skills, not development of entry level skills.

Lack of Vocational Counseling,  
Job Placement and Follow-up

Vocational counseling, job placement and follow-up activities are nonexistent or extremely limited in scope and number. Because CYA has no trained vocational counselors, systematic career counseling does not occur. A career awareness program is offered, but only to wards participating in the ESEA Title I program.

The CYA lacks an adequate job placement program, and this limits the effectiveness of vocational education. Although some teachers spend time developing jobs for wards, it is not a regular duty. Presently, parole agents make some job referrals but do little or no job development. Parole operations are currently being reorganized, however, and since the new focus is on re-entry into the community, job development activities are likely to be increased.

With the exception of parole discharge data, there is presently no formal job placement follow-up system for wards. Consequently, vocational program effectiveness and relevance to employer needs cannot be determined. Parole data which are available for 1977 indicate, however, that at the time of discharge from parole only 115 of 3,071 wards were employed in the fields for which they were trained. However, over 1,000 wards were employed in other fields. CYA's Program Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES) is currently developing a formal follow-up system which is to be used to track wards placed in jobs.

Representatives of the Department of Education stated that noncompliance with established vocational program standards could result in CYA's loss of part or all of its federal vocational education funds (\$248,000) and may jeopardize future federal funding to CYA. The standard operating procedure for handling noncompliance in situations such as this is for the Federal Government to require agency repayment of funds for expenditures which supported program components.

#### Poor Coordination With Other Program Staff

Vocational program coordination and linkage between the CYA Institutions and Camps Branch and the Parole Branch is limited or nonexistent. One reason for the lack of contact is the distance between the parole offices and the institutions. Vocational teachers seldom, if ever, have any contact with parole agents to inform them of ward skill levels. Except for a pre-parole evaluation to discuss

proposed living arrangements, there is no early contact with the ward for familiarization and job development purposes. Consequently, the ward may not have a job waiting for him upon release although employment is regarded as essential to the rehabilitative process. Agents in one parole office stated that no attempt is made to coordinate a ward's institutional training with his parole activities. Similarly, there is no coordination between parole agents and the EDD staff working at employment projects being implemented at three institutions.

#### CONCLUSION

The CYA vocational program needs improvement if it is to prepare wards for employment. The vocational program lacks (1) planning which is responsive to labor market and wards needs; (2) adequate vocational counseling, job placement and follow-up activities; and (3) continuity of service between branches. The vocational program therefore may not be providing wards with relevant job knowledge or salable skills.

#### RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that CYA take the following actions to improve the effectiveness of the vocational program:

- Develop a vocational education master plan which includes the following features:

- (a) Labor market needs assessment
- (b) Specific program standards
- (c) Student vocational needs assessment
- (d) Vocational counseling
- (e) Work experience opportunities
- (f) Job development and placement activities
- (g) Ward follow-up and program evaluation
- (h) Trade advisory committee

- Increase coordination efforts between the camps and institutions and parole offices with emphasis on job development and placement of wards.

NEED FOR IMPROVED EVALUATION SYSTEM  
TO DETERMINE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The California Youth Authority has not implemented a comprehensive program evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of its education programs. As a result, effective programs and courses may not be identified and disseminated throughout the system and ineffective programs may be allowed to continue, allowing potential inefficiencies in the use of available funds. Poor evaluation also hinders decision-making about programs, priorities and resource allocations.

Evaluation Requirements

CYA education policy and the state vocational education plan require evaluation of academic and vocational education programs. Federal and state vocational education requirements mandate that vocational courses and programs be evaluated annually on the basis of course and program objectives and the effectiveness of the program in preparing students to meet labor market trends. Evaluation of academic achievement should consist of testing, ward achievement, data analysis and feedback to the schools.

CYA's Planning, Research, Evaluation and Development Branch has a four-person research section which is responsible for conducting research on parole, institutions and camps. The branch has recently developed two ongoing data collection systems which collect educational data. The Student Achievement Data System (SADS)

measures improvement in math and reading only by comparing TABE scores at the time of commitment with TABE scores prior to parole. The Offender Based Institution Tracking System (OBITS) is an on-line recordkeeping system which compiles statistics on educational accomplishments, such as the number of high school credits earned per ward and the number of diplomas awarded in a given time period.

CYA also has a Program Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES), which is an in-house management system. The goal of PMES is, over a five-year period, to establish performance standards and objectives for each unit in CYA. System staff are currently working with the Education Services Unit to develop performance standards for vocational education.

#### Lack of Comprehensive Evaluation System

Despite the existence of this branch and these systems, CYA administration has failed to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its education program. State-funded programs which represent 82 percent of the total budget have never been systematically evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness. This includes the developmental and junior college courses. However, the federally funded ESEA program has been evaluated because CYA is required to annually evaluate it.

Several factors have inhibited the development of a comprehensive evaluation system. First, there has been limited development of systemwide performance standards and objectives, which are essential for assessing program effectiveness. We were unable to evaluate the effectiveness of most of the academic programs because of the lack of performance standards. Only the remedial courses have a systematic performance standard, which is one month's improvement for every month in class. Although CYA reported that most remedial classes met that standard, the methodology upon which this conclusion is based contains a number of deficiencies including some which overestimate the improvement in performance. There are also no systemwide performance standards for the developmental program or for the junior college program.

In addition, CYA has failed to designate staff necessary to perform evaluation functions. In the past there has been only one part-time graduate student assigned to perform research and evaluation of education programs. Finally, since the Education Services Unit lacks sufficient authority over camps and institutions, it cannot assure (1) adoption of systemwide standards and objectives and (2) participation in evaluation activities. Currently, one institution is not inputting data into the SADS because it contends it lacks staff to carry out that function.

As a result, although some data are being collected, the data are not being used to evaluate the effectiveness of CYA's total education program. Failure to evaluate the program precludes identification of areas needing improvement and assessment of benefits of various programs. It also precludes comparisons of the effectiveness of various educational experiences as a basis for setting priorities in allocating CYA's education budget. The CYA administration has recognized the need for evaluating the education program but has yet to take needed action.

#### CONCLUSION

The CYA needs to improve the education evaluation system. The present system lacks performance standards and objectives, which are essential for determining program effectiveness. Some data concerning ward performance are collected but are not analyzed and used systematically to evaluate program effectiveness. These conditions reflect a number of factors.

For example, the Education Services Unit lacks sufficient authority over the camps and institutions to ensure mandatory use of systemwide standards and objectives or participation in evaluation activities. In addition, education program evaluation has not been assigned sufficient staff to perform the evaluation function. As a result, effective courses and programs are not

identified and ineffective programs are allowed to continue, allowing potential inefficiencies in the use of available funds.

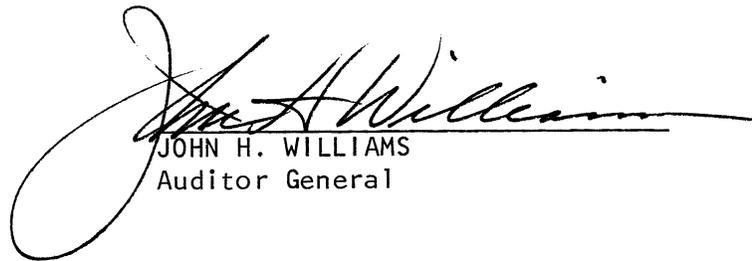
#### RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that CYA take the following actions to improve the education evaluation system:

- The Education Services Unit should (a) use the existing Program Monitoring and Evaluation System to develop specific classroom performance standards for wards and objectives for the entire education program and (b) implement an ongoing comprehensive data collection system as a basis for educational evaluation. All the CYA facilities should be required to participate in educational evaluation activities

- CYA management should ensure sufficient allocation of resources within the research section of the Planning, Research and Evaluation Development Branch to conduct adequate evaluation of educational programs.

Respectfully submitted,



JOHN H. WILLIAMS  
Auditor General

November 30, 1978

Staff: Dr. Joan S. Bissell, Supervising Auditor  
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## DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AUTHORITY

4241 Williamsborough Drive  
Sacramento 95823



November 22, 1978

Mr. John H. Williams, Auditor General  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
925 "L" Street, Suite 750  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report, "A Review of the California Youth Authority's Education Program." The members of your staff have made a very careful study of our education program, and I believe their recommendations will be of considerable assistance to us in our efforts to improve the Youth Authority's education program.

The first series of recommendations include suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the diagnostic process. For some time, the Department of the Youth Authority has been concerned about the effectiveness of the educational diagnostic services at the reception center-clinics. We have recently decreased educational diagnostic staff at the reception centers and shifted this resource to increase educational diagnostic services at our eight institutions by providing one school psychologist at each Youth Authority school. We are well aware that the educational diagnostic services are not standardized at each institution; however, we are working towards achieving standardization.

We are not satisfied with the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for Youth Authority wards. We have had difficulty finding an appropriate group achievement test that fits into our short clinic processing period; however, we will continue searching for a more effective group screening test and will review any group educational achievement test that is recommended.

We are aware of the limitations of the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB). We will again seek out a vocational aptitude test that can be administered to all Youth Authority wards. We will also explore the use of the newly developed Non-verbal Aptitude Test Battery (NATB) as recommended.

As part of a strong effort to comply with Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, we are currently developing a cooperative proposal with the Division of Special Education, State Department of Education, that will set up assessment teams to identify all Youth Authority wards who are in need of special education.

We are seeking technical assistance to help us identify funding sources for special programs for the limited and non-English speaking students in the Youth Authority.

Mr. John H. Williams, Auditor General  
November 22, 1978  
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The next series of recommendations are intended to facilitate the development of educational programs which are more responsive to the specialized academic needs of Youth Authority wards. During the past year, the Youth Authority has been working very closely with the State Department of education to comply with the provisions of Public Law 94-142. In conjunction with the State Department of Education, we have developed the first draft of an interagency agreement to assist us in meeting the requirements of the Law. We have had two of our sites monitored by State Department of Education staff and have been given a positive rating of "moving toward compliance" with this Law. We have provided one-week training sessions to a five-member team from each of our institutions under State Department of Education direction with training administered by Santa Clara County Special Education staff. We are about to submit a half-million dollar proposal to the California State Board of Education that would set up two regional assessment teams to identify all wards in the Youth Authority who are in need of special education.

The next series of recommendations suggest that the Youth Authority take a series of actions to improve the effectiveness of the vocational program. This year, for the first time, the Youth Authority became eligible to receive funds made available by two sections of the Vocational Education Act of 1976. With guidance from the State Department of Education, the first step in this process was an \$80,000 contract with CARVELL, INC., to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the Youth Authority's existing vocational education program. This assessment has been completed with the final report being given to the Department only a few days ago. As a result of this report, an implementation plan is being developed which includes ways to comply with these recommendations.

The last recommendations include suggestions to improve the education evaluation system. The Institutions and Camps Branch is expending a great deal of staff time and effort in the development of a program monitoring and evaluation system for education. The establishment of performance standards and monitoring systems for diverse Youth Authority institutional education programs is a difficult and time-consuming process. The Department is eager to improve its monitoring and educational data collection system. However, resources for systematic data collection and evaluative research on educational programs in the Department are limited.

Planning, Research, Evaluation and Development (PRED) Branch managers have recently allocated additional staff time to assist the Education Services Unit in improving its educational grantsmanship capability. Youth Authority administration will study educational evaluation needs further to see if it is possible to utilize current research staff time or if additional resources will be necessary.

We will be pleased to meet with you or the Joint Legislative Audit Committee to discuss the recommendations included in your report and our responses to them if you desire further information.

Sincerely,



Pearl S. West, Director  
(916) 445-2561

Office of the Auditor General

cc: Members of the Legislature  
Office of the Governor  
Office of the Lieutenant Governor  
Secretary of State  
State Controller  
State Treasurer  
Legislative Analyst  
Director of Finance  
Assembly Office of Research  
Senate Office of Research  
Assembly Majority/Minority Consultants  
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