

# Educational Expansion Program on Rikers Island A Program of the New York City Departments of Education and Correction

## PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

### 1. Introduction

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has funded approximately 40 initiatives across some 20 sponsoring agencies aimed at reducing the number of working poor, young adults, and children living in poverty in New York City. CEO is committed to evaluating its programs and policies and is developing a specific evaluation plan for each of its initiatives. For example, several major new initiatives will implement random assignment evaluations or other rigorous designs. Some programs are slated to receive implementation and outcome evaluations, while others may be evaluated using readily available administrative data. This differentiated approach reflects the varied scale of the CEO interventions, data and evaluation opportunities, and finite program and evaluation resources. Westat and Metis Associates are evaluating many of these programs on behalf of CEO. The purposes of the evaluations are to collect and report data on the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the programs in the CEO initiative to inform policy and program decision-making within CEO and the agencies that sponsor the programs.

The first phase of the Westat/Metis evaluation is to conduct a systematic review of selected CEO programs. The program reviews involve Westat/Metis staff reviewing program documents, obtaining available implementation and outcome data, interviewing program administrators, and, where appropriate, going on-site to observe program activities and interview direct service staff and participants. The results are used to assess the program design and implementation, develop a logic model to represent the underlying theory of each program, determine the extent to which the program meets key CEO criteria, examine the measurement and information systems for the program, and provide options for next steps. This Program Review Report provides an overview and assessment of the program on several dimensions, including its goals, fidelity to the program model, target population and clients served thus far, program services, and agency management.

Rikers Island, established as a jail in 1935, currently holds approximately 14,000 inmates (ages 16 years old and older). Detainees (persons awaiting bail) comprise two-thirds of the population. The New York City Department of Correction (DOC) also incarcerates in Rikers those sentenced in the City to terms of up to 1 year, parole violators awaiting parole revocation hearings, and persons charged with civil crimes. The majority of inmates are housed in 10 facilities. The population on Rikers turns over about every 2 months. In FY2007, the average length of stay for detainees is 46 days, and for sentenced inmates it was 37 days.<sup>1</sup>

The Rikers Educational Expansion Program targets inmates ages 19 to 24 years old who have not traditionally attended school on the island and offers them the same payment incentive that is provided to inmates who engage in work tasks on the island. The program was designed by the New

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<sup>1</sup> Sprol. "Rikers Island: New York Neighborhoods." Accessed August 25, 2008, from [www.sprol.com](http://www.sprol.com). NYC Department of Correction. "DOC Statistics." Accessed August 25, 2008, from [www.nyc.gov/html/doc](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doc).

York City Department of Education (DOE)<sup>2</sup> in cooperation with DOC and initiated October 15, 2007. Prison and jail inmates have been identified as the “most educationally disadvantaged population in the United States.”<sup>3</sup> Rikers Island is the second largest jail in the country. In general, approximately half of the individuals housed in jails do not have a high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate, though there is some evidence the percentage has decreased slightly on the national level (44% in 2002).<sup>4</sup> In Rikers, the estimates are higher. Interviewees estimated as many as 80 percent of the Rikers population lacks a high school diploma or GED.<sup>5</sup> On an average day in fiscal year (FY) 07, 96 percent of the eligible inmates ages 19 to 24 did not attend school while in custody on Rikers Island.<sup>6</sup>

The CEO goal for targeting youth in the 16- to 24-year-old age range was a good match for DOE, which had been considering how to support the young people, particularly those ages 19 to 21, who were eligible for school services but not mandated to attend. Enrollment for this age group is lower than that of both younger (18 and younger) and older inmates (25 and older), and by targeting this group, DOE and DOC hoped to increase literacy levels and GED attainment and ultimately reduce (or at least delay) recidivism. DOE funding was funneled to the two educational institutions on Rikers—Austin H. McCormick Island Academy (Island Academy), established in 1959, and Horizon Academy, established in 1998.<sup>7,8</sup> CEO funding to DOC included costs for inmate incentives, start-up for the educational hotline, recruitment posters, five additional corrections officers to provide additional security and escort services, and building expenses to put classrooms in the Annex of the George Matochan Detention Center (GMDC).

Information and data for this Program Review Report are based on interviews conducted by Westat/Metis staff between May and mid-June 2008 with staff of the CEO, DOE administrative staff, Horizon Academy principal and teachers, Island Academy principal and teachers, student participants in both programs, and DOC administrative staff; and a review of program documents and monthly and quarterly data reports through July 2008 and management reports from DOE and DOC through May 2008.

A key analytic tool in the program review is development of a logic model that serves as a visual representation of the underlying logic or theory of a program. The program logic model details the program’s context, assumptions, and resources and their relationship to one another. By examining the program’s internal logic and external context, the evaluation team and reader are able to determine if the program design is consistent with overall goals and capable of achieving its intended

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<sup>2</sup> District 79 is responsible for developing alternative schools and programs for students that have difficulty with traditional high schools. District 79 is responsible for both high school programs and adult education programs in correctional facilities, including Rikers.

<sup>3</sup> Klein, S., Tolbert, M., Burgarin, R., Cataldi, E.F., & Tauscheck, G. (2004). *Correctional Education: Assessing the Status of Prison Programs and Information Needs*. Berkeley, CA: MPR Associates, Inc. Accessed July 3, 2008, from <http://www.mpine.com/products>.

<sup>4</sup> Caryton, A., & Neusteter, S.R., (2008). *The Current State of Correctional Education*. Paper presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education. New York City: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Lisante, T. NYC Department of Education (2008). Phone communication with program review team.

<sup>6</sup> Lisante, T. NYC Department of Education (August 16, 2007). E-mail communication to CEO.

<sup>7</sup> Horizon Academy and Island Academy are the two high schools on Rikers Island and operate under District 79 of the New York City Department of Education. District 79 is responsible for developing alternative schools and programs for students that have difficulty with traditional high schools. District 79 is responsible for both high school programs and adult education programs in correctional facilities, including Rikers. Island Academy has three school sites and serves detained and sentenced male and female inmates ages 16-24. Horizon Academy serves detained male inmates ages 18-24 in five jails.

<sup>8</sup> Horizon Academy was established in response to a 1996 class action suit brought by the Legal Aid Society on behalf of inmates ages 16 to 21.

outcomes. Toward this end, this brief focuses on early outcomes and the challenges faced in achieving them.

## 2. Overview and Assessment of the Program

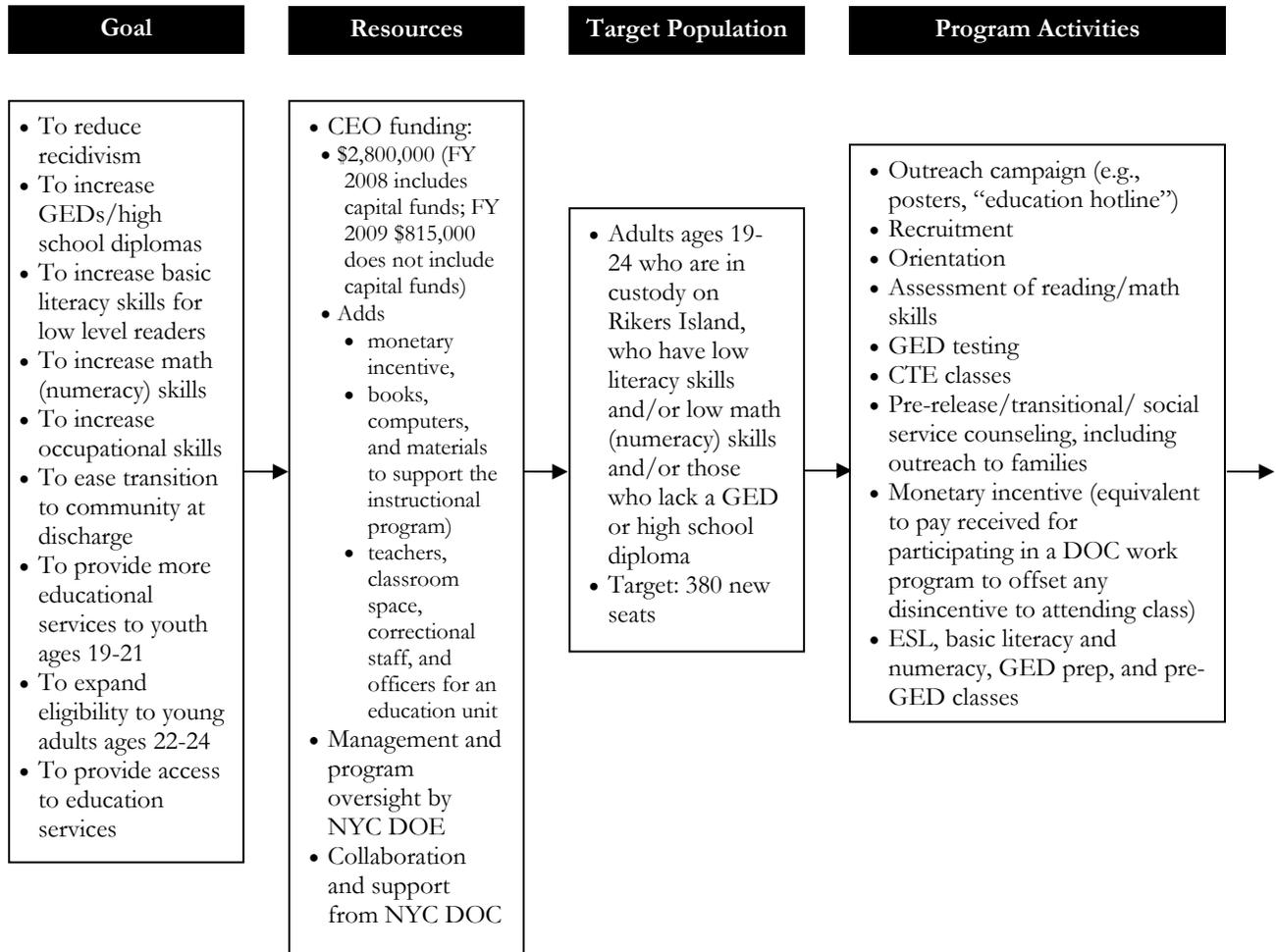
It is important to understand the corrections environment within which educational programs operate. Island Academy's main goal is to provide compulsory education to the adolescent population (16-18) in 3 jails (EMTC, RMSC, RNDC). In addition, they serve inmates in the 19- to 21-year-old age group who are housed in the same buildings as the adolescents and informally serve inmates over 21. Horizon Academy was created to serve adult inmates (19+) not living in the three buildings already serviced by Island. At the Island Academy, inmates aged 16 to 18 attend school from 8am-2:30 pm (AM school) in all three buildings. Inmates aged 19 and older attend school from 3-6pm (PM) in all three buildings. At EMTC (RIDE program only) inmates 19 and older attend school from 8am-1pm. Horizon provides services in five buildings. The AM school takes place from 9am-1:30pm for the 19-21 year old age groups at GMDC. Instruction is held from 1pm to 4:50 pm for AMKC, GRVC, NIC, and OBCC. Vocational classes are held for students 19 and older on Monday-Thursday at GMDC from 1:30-4:30 and from 5:30-8:30 pm. Adult basic education classes are held for those 22 and older from 2:30-5:30 in GMDC, AMKC, GRVC, and OBCC.

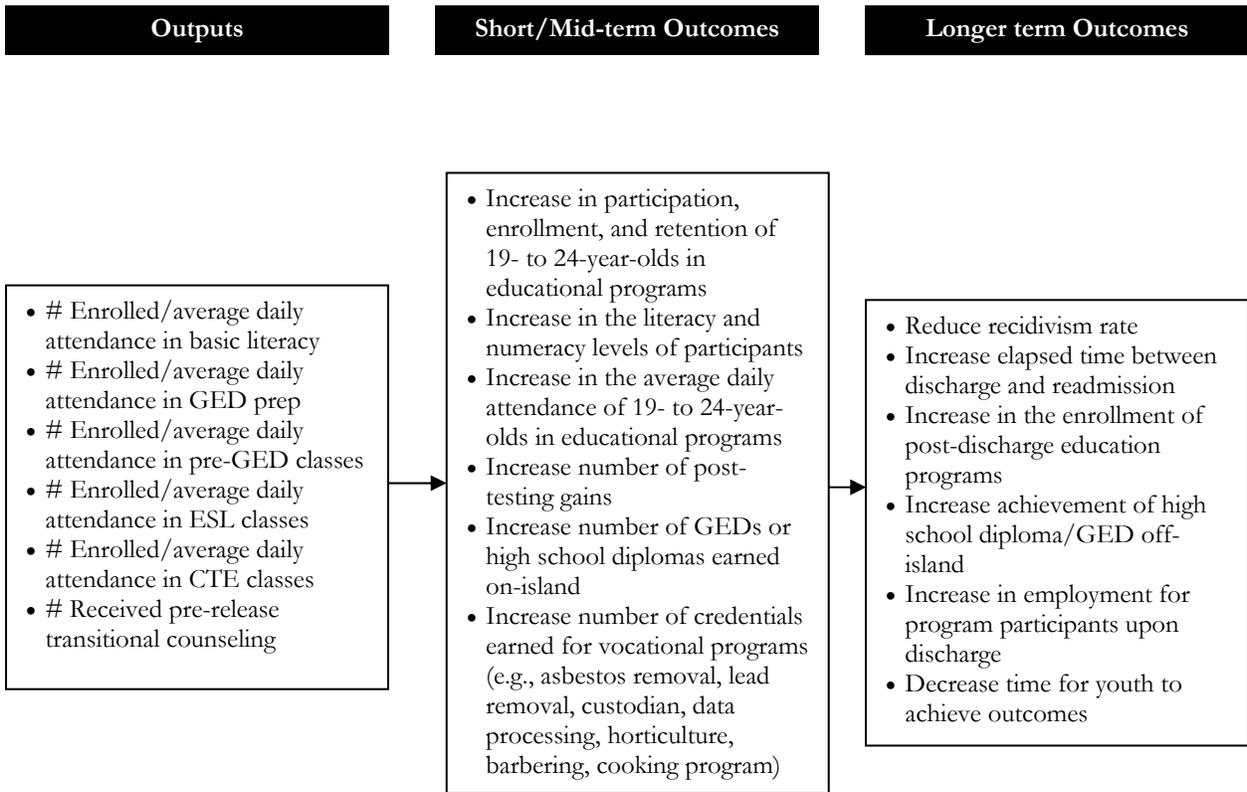
Both Island and Horizon Academies have large numbers of inmates with low literacy and no high school diplomas or GEDs. The regimen required in a jail environment often competes with voluntary education programs directed at inmates 19 and older. Classes compete with court dates, medical visits, law library interests, and eating and recreation schedules. Jail settings further complicate matters because of variable lengths of stay, ranging from few days to almost a year. Teachers can receive new students daily. It is difficult to track academic growth when an inmate may not attend from one month to the next. Also students are pulled from many different housing units and require escorts to get to class. Students from some units, such as in GMDC, were reported as being frequently late for class. Lockdowns also result in limited class time.

**Program Goals.** The main goals of the program are to (1) increase the number of Rikers young inmates in the 19- to 24-year-old age group receiving educational services, (2) increase literacy levels, (3) increase the number of GEDs earned, (4) increase occupational skills, (5) reduce class size (increasing one-on-one involvement with the teachers), and (6) successfully transition young inmates back into the community (reducing recidivism and time between repeat offenses). Also, particularly from the on-island principals, the program goals are to increase “real access” to education by increasing the offerings and space available for class. Targeting 19- to 24-year-olds is particularly important to the educators on Rikers. Inmates younger than 19 are mandated to attend school, while inmates over 25 were reported to be easier to get into school because many are repeat offenders, had been in Rikers before, and were willing to try to break the cycle of incarceration. The 19- to 24-year-olds are often first-time offenders and reacting to the Rikers experience. Multiple recruitment attempts are needed to enroll inmates; once enrolled, inmates may drop in and out of the program, before becoming fully engaged or committed to the educational program.

The Educational Expansion Program model is displayed in a logic model—or theory of action—format on the following two pages. The logic model includes the program’s context, assumptions, and resources.

## Expansion of Educational Programs on Rikers Island Logic Model





**Context**

- On a typical day in FY07, 96% of eligible inmates ages 19 to 24 did not attend school while in custody on Rikers Island. The majority of 19- to 21-year-old inmates on Rikers Island are junior high or high school dropouts with poor reading and writing skills. Data from Rikers Horizon Academy, the school for 19- to 21-year-olds, indicate that 63% of English-speaking students read below an 8th-grade level, and 80% of limited English proficient students read below an 8th-grade level.<sup>1</sup>
- Re-arrest rates were reduced by 9% and re-incarceration rates were reduced by 10% for inmates who received educational services when incarcerated.<sup>2</sup>
- Recidivism rates for inmates who received a GED when incarcerated were 5% lower than those of inmates who entered custody without a high school degree and who did not earn a GED while incarcerated.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lisante, T. Aug. 16, 2007. NYC Department of Education. E-mail communication to CEO.

<sup>2</sup> Steurer, S., Smith, L., and Tracy, A. 2001. "Three State Recidivism Study." Correctional Education Association. Submitted to the Office of Correctional Education, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Department of Correctional Services, 1989. "Follow-up study of a sample of offenders who earned high school equivalency diplomas while incarcerated."

**Fidelity to the Program Model.** The program is being implemented as specified. Additional classes were added to each of the schools to keep class size small (student/teacher ratios of 8:1 for basic literacy and 15:1 for other programs). Summer school for students with special needs was possible in two buildings in Horizon Academy due to the additional CEO funding. The additional vocational offerings were also implemented in Horizon Academy and Island Academy. Classrooms were set up in the GMDC Annex to increase access to educational services.

**Target Population and Clients Served.** The program added 380 seats targeting the 19- to 24-year-old population of Rikers inmates.<sup>9</sup> The increased capacity resulted in an increase in student enrollment of 609 or 160 percent. Table 1 provides demographic data for Horizon and Island Academy enrollees, as well as the population of Rikers for this age group during the 2008 school year. Overall, the population in the two academies is comparable to the Rikers population. Island Academy reflected notable differences from the overall population in the higher percentage of females (27%) and higher percentage of youth ages 19 to 20 (60%). However, these differences are largely a function of the residential facilities from which it draws (see discussion of jail facilities in “Program Services”). Young Hispanic inmates make up a higher percentage (46%) of the Horizon enrollees than found in the general population or Island Academy (35% each). Young Black inmates were the majority of enrollees in both academies as well as the population on the whole. Enrollees were most likely to come from Brooklyn or the Bronx, while the general population was more likely to come from Manhattan.

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<sup>9</sup> Translating the number of seats into number of youth is not a straightforward calculation. Rikers’ population turns over approximately every 2 months. We presume that as enrollments increase, the level of effort to get youth enrolled also increases; consequently it is not a direct correlation that each seat will be filled with each turnover. Estimates of three times this number (1,140 inmates) may prove a reasonable estimate as the program develops.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics for Horizon and Island Academies Enrollees and Rikers Population for School Year 2007/2008**

Demographic Characteristics	Horizon Academy		Island Academy		Rikers Population (Assigned to Residential Facility) <sup>10</sup>	
	No. of Participants	%	No. of Participants	%	No. of Residents	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	1211	100%	982	73%	12,621	92%
Female	0	0%	363	27%	1,151	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,211</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,772</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
Asian	8	1%	13	1%	100	1%
Black	612	51%	794	59%	7,725	56%
White	24	2%	54	4%	784	6%
Hispanic	558	46%	444	33%	4830	35%
Other	4	0%	13	1%	327	2%
Unreported	5	0%	27	2%	6	>1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,211</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,772</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>						
19-20	460	38%	807	60%	4,773	35%
21-24	751	62%	538	40%	8,999	65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,211</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,772</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Borough of Residence</b>						
Manhattan	146	12%	282	21%	3,518	25%
Bronx	369	30%	296	22%	2,976	22%
Brooklyn	351	29%	457	34%	1,875	14%
Queens	325	27%	256	19%	1,984	14%
Staten Island	20	2%	54	4%	486	4%
Non-NYC or Unknown					2,933	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,211</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,772</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: End-of-year data special runs done by Horizon staff (7/18/08), Island staff (7/28), and DOC staff (7/25). Data are unduplicated.

**Outreach and Recruitment.** Recruitment is approached in a variety of ways by many different people.

1. Fliers and posters advertising the school are developed jointly by school and DOC staff.
2. Assistant principals, teachers, and counselors discuss schools in the housing areas and at DOC intake.
3. DOC has an on-island educational trailer with one staff person who manages the hotline so inmates can call to get information on the school program and services.
4. Letters are sent and calls made to parents (identified by the transition counseling team) to encourage attendance.
5. Daily announcements are made about the school and orientation.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers exclude inmates released from the arraignment court pens.

6. Discharge programs that make routine presentations on-island encourage young inmates to take advantage of the education available on Rikers.
7. School staff receive a daily alphabetized list of the population on Rikers (by individual age up to 21 and by age 21 and older). Officers in Island Academy and attendance teachers in Horizon call the list every day to determine if new inmates are interested in attending school.

Horizon sends brochures to youth who indicate they are interested in school on the Request for Educational Services forms completed at intake. Additionally, in two focus groups conducted with students at Horizon and Island Academies, participants indicated that they learned about school from others enrolled. Some students commented that one-on-one discussions with corrections officers encouraged them to apply, although others felt strongly that getting information from correctional officers depended on who the officer was. Several believed that the officers did not support them in going to school. Officers assigned to the schools routinely provided support to youth about coming to school and getting their education. Training is conducted annually for corrections officers. At the initiation of the CEO expansion effort in 2007, school officers received new officer training in support of the effort. This was then followed by the annual refresher training.

Involvement of corrections officers in recruitment efforts differs by school. Horizon Academy requests escort services from DOC officers to the five residential facilities targeted by that school. Horizon takes the perspective that its teachers understand its program better than the officers, and the school chooses to approach the inmates directly. Like Horizon, Island Academy uses its own staff to recruit inmates, but relies more on DOC for recruitment. Island Academy asks the officers associated with its three housing units to recruit inmates into the program. One officer has been particularly successful and consistent in encouraging inmates in the women's facility, Rose M. Singer Center, to become involved in the educational program and encouraging inmates to stay in, once enrolled.

Orientations are held daily in Horizon and Island Academies. The principal of Horizon recently developed a video on Horizon Academy that she believes is well received by the inmates. Teachers and transition counselors are available during the orientation to talk to inmates. The transition counselors are trained counselors, psychologists, social workers, and school guidance counselors. These staff discuss the purpose of education and how education can improve performance in a work environment. These counselors also identify inmates' parents and attempt to engage the parents to support youth in school.

Inmates who opt out of school ("refusals") meet with someone from the transition team to see what factors influence that decision. The transitional counselor then tells the inmate that he/she will be contacted again within 30 days to see if he/she has changed his/her mind. However, while on site we found that one counselor would check up within the next week. Refusals get invited to orientations for up to 2 months following the refusal. School staff reported that it is difficult to engage the youth when they first enter Rikers because their attention is focused on what is happening around them in the jail. As the new inmates become more familiar with their environment, they become more open to going to school. Orientation is open to any inmates, even those who have refused months prior.

Inmates who agree to schooling are tested for placement. This process generally takes several days, though one of the Island Academy students in the focus group reported going to orientation, being

tested, and starting class on the same day. Island Academy uses a computer testing instrument, STAR, which tests reading capability and math skills to determine placement. This instrument provides immediate results. If youth are on the cusp using the STAR, they may be given Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Horizon uses TABE, which is also used throughout the NYC school system. Additionally, staff conduct a thorough intake of the new students to identify previous programs/schools attended and the existence of an individualized education plan (IEP).

Horizon uses attendance teachers to retain students in the program. These teachers call or visit the dorms to find out why a student did not attend and send letters to students inviting them to attend a meeting at school to discuss attendance. Attendance teachers also have one-on-one meetings with long-term absentees (approximately 1 month or one attendance period). Attendance teachers talk to parents to encourage youth to go to (and stay in) Horizon. Where appropriate, they also support participation in off-island educational programs along with transitional counselors. Island Academy does not have attendance teachers to locate youth who do not come to class.

**Program Services.** The program expands on services already provided in the on-island school programs (English as a Second Language or ESL), basic literacy and numeracy, pre-GED, and GED both for school-age and Adult Basic Education (ABE). With CEO funds, there is the added emphasis of small classrooms (12:1 student/teacher ratio for basic literacy and 15:1 for the other programs). ABE classes tend to be larger, given the large number of inmates 19 years old and older. School hours are from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Island Academy and 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in Horizon.<sup>11</sup> The CEO program also added/expanded short-term vocational programs. In Horizon Academy new vocational programs included asbestos removal, horticulture, and lead removal. Funding allowed expansion of data processing and custodial services. All of these vocational programs result in a certificate. Participation in asbestos and lead removal and horticulture requires a GED, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, and a 6<sup>th</sup> grade math level. In addition to vocational classes offered in the regular school session, short-term vocational classes are conducted during traditional school recesses and holidays. Island Academy vocational courses were expanded as a result of CEO funds. These include barbering, computer processing, and cooking. Both the cooking and the computer programs offer certificates. Vocational programs at Island Academy do not have GED or reading and math comprehension level prerequisites. Island Academy vocational programs are held throughout the school year. For example, cooking classes are held Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 6:00; barbering classes are held twice a week, also in 3-hour sessions. These classes are not offered during school breaks.

Participation in Island versus Horizon Academy is based on the facilities in which inmates reside. Classes are also held in these facilities. Horizon Academy conducts classes and draws from five buildings:

- GMDC (George Matochan Detention Center and Annex),
- AMKC (Anna M. Kross Center),
- GRVC (George R. Vierno Center),

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<sup>11</sup> Discussions with school Principals indicate that classes are three hours long; however there is a combination of approach. In some sites, classes are three hours with one teacher while in other sites classes rotate either every hour with a new teacher and new subject for each hour or every 90 minutes.

- NIC (North Infirmery Command), and
- OBCC (Otis Bantum Correctional Center GED and the Central Punitive Segregation Unit or CPSU).

Island Academy provides services in three buildings:

- EMTC (Eric M. Thomas Center, which houses sentenced males ages 16 to 24),
- RMSC (Rose M. Singer Center, which houses sentenced females ages 16 to 24), and
- RNDC (Robert N. Davoran Center, which houses detainees).

The curriculum is based on an adult education model for all Rikers students 16 and older. Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a modular curriculum that can take into account the variable lengths of sentences. Also, unlike the traditional adolescent curriculum, which focuses on continuing education, the focus for the adult students is on developing skills to move into a job once they leave the island and return to their communities. Island Academy teachers are experimenting with different teaching modules. Some teachers teach the same group of adults, while other teachers may move around between facilities. Some teachers teach adolescent students in the mornings and stay in the afternoons to teach the adults. Most teachers, however, work in the afternoon 5 days a week rather than a 10-hour workday.

The schools have the most difficulty recruiting pre-GED students. Lower level readers are more sensitive about learning to read and the type of materials often used. The principals considered this a real challenge for increasing the literacy scores among the adult population. The Wilson reading system, which adjusts reading subjects for older inexperienced readers, is used on Rikers; however, past poor reading experiences may inhibit inmate recruitment. DOE is currently looking into programs/methods/strategies that cater to intermediate-level readers in order to boost recruitment for pre-GED then subsequent GED classes. Once a method is selected and piloted, it will be used district-wide (including Rikers) so students exiting Rikers can find the same materials at their neighborhood schools.

A high percentage of inmates (33% in Island Academy and 44% in Horizon Academy) qualify for special education. This is compared to 9 percent of the general population enrolled in special education (ages 18 through 21) in New York state.<sup>12</sup> When individuals arrive at Rikers, DOE determines whether youth 18 and under have a diploma or GED and whether they have special education needs (such as an IEP in place).<sup>13</sup> Rikers generally has no information regarding special needs or educational history for students 19 and over. Upon enrollment, students may also be assessed, as warranted, for special education needs and the development of an IEP. All youth are mainstreamed and are reassessed at 30- or 60-day intervals.

Like many schools, Rikers academies offer counseling for students on an ongoing basis. Resources are provided largely through special education funding, though counseling is not limited to special

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs (2007). *27th Annual (2005) Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, vol. 2, Table 1-12.* Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>13</sup> Special education is required for youth ages 3 through 21 through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

education students. A sign-up sheet is available for students to request counseling. Principals reported that a large number of students do request counseling services.

Pre-release or transition counseling was greatly enhanced through the CEO contract for students and is conducted by a transition team comprising trained counselors, psychologists, social workers, and school guidance counselors. These same personnel were involved in recruiting the students into the school. Information gathered during recruitment is shared with the discharge planning staff. Staff discuss continuing education, the purpose of education, and the focus on work. The counselors talk to them about how school will help them later in life. This process informs the inmates about the discharge options that are available to them in their community once they are discharged, such as Getting Out and Staying Out (GO/SO) and CUNY Catch.<sup>14</sup> The transitional counseling team also conducts extensive outreach to families and attorneys, provides one-on-one counseling (as needed and requested), and makes referrals to programs on- and off-island. The team members spend a lot of time identifying programs and services (for education, job training, substance abuse, mental health services) for students when they are released. Collaborations with CUNY Catch and GO/SO were particularly cited. These programs support resume writing and interview skills development, though these skills are also offered as part of the school curriculum. CUNY Catch supplies off-island space for the monthly support groups conducted for families (average attendance 18 to 20) as well as on-island weekly anger management groups. GO/SO also provides on-island counseling.

Students are assessed (using the same test used upon entry) after 150 hours of instruction (approximately 6 weeks or 50 days). At that time, the youth also completes a DOE satisfaction survey.<sup>15</sup>

Predictor GED testing is conducted monthly. A predictor test is conducted before the youth take the actual GED examination. The predictor test uses a high pass score, so most youth do pass the GED once they get to the actual test. Tests are given in all buildings. The purpose of the predictor test is to target interventions and see who is qualified to take GED.

One of the key components of the Educational Expansion Program is the introduction of a monetary incentive to support increased enrollment and participation in the educational program. This incentive is equivalent to the lowest wage paid for jobs within the prison, approximately 27 cents per hour. This money supports things the student may need from the commissary. In order to receive the incentive, students must attend school 4 of 5 days (80% attendance),<sup>16</sup> participate in class, complete the required work, and follow school behavioral requirements.

Services are provided by a range of principals, assistant principals, teachers, resource teachers, GED coordinators, parent coordinators, clinicians (social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors), paraprofessionals, and secretaries. Teachers are certified by New York State. Roles played by these staff vary from traditional expectations. All staff work on recruitment and retention of students into the program. They work in the classroom, visit housing units, and talk and visit with

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<sup>14</sup> GO/SO and CUNY Catch are discharge programs for Rikers inmates moving into a community setting. They support educational progress (GEDs, community college enrollment), job readiness and placement, and community re-entry. These programs have also received CEO funding.

<sup>15</sup> Horizon Academy asks students to complete a DOE satisfaction survey. Island Academy also asks students to complete a satisfaction survey however it is not distributed by every teacher distributes and not every student completes it.

<sup>16</sup> Calculations are based on time available to go to class. Excused absences include court dates and medical visits.

parents. Teacher retention has improved over the years. The stability of the principals (14 years for Frank Dody, principal of Island Academy, and 10 years for Gloria Ortiz, principal of Horizon Academy) has helped with retention. The principals estimated teacher retention rate at 6 years.

**Outputs and Outcomes.** Table 2 (Island Academy) and Table 3 (Horizon Academy) provide milestone data for each of the three quarters in 2007/2008 across performance measures as well as an unduplicated count on the full school year 2007/2008. As stated earlier, the schools served 609 students over the previous year. This represented an increase of 28 percent for inmates 19 to 21 years old and 36 percent for inmates 22 to 24 years old. GEDs were awarded to 147 youth, a 20 percent increase of the 123 GEDs awarded in the 2006 year.<sup>17</sup> Horizon awarded 125 vocational certifications or a 45 percent increase over the previous year. Recidivism rates (readmissions to DOC custody) were 1 percent of the total enrollment in the two schools. The recidivism rate for all FY2007 Rikers' discharges who were 19 to 24 years old is 36 percent.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 2: Performance Data for the School Year (2007-2008 and 2006-2007) for Island Academy and Horizon Academy**

Category	2007-2008 Island Academy	2007-2008 Horizon Academy	2007-2008 Total	2006-2007 Total	Change
Age of new enrollees to the school(s):					
19-21	736	713	1,449	1,135	28%
22-24	609	498	1,107	812 <sup>19</sup>	36%
Total	1,345	1,211	2,556	1,947	31%
Passing GED	40	107	147 <sup>20</sup>	123 <sup>21</sup>	20%
Receiving vocational certification <sup>22</sup>	n/a	125	125	86	45%
Re-admitted to DOC custody <sup>23</sup>	20	16	36	n/a	n/a

Also cited as positive outcomes are (1) the library funded by CEO in Horizon Academy, (2) the new classrooms (and improved access to educational services) in the GMDC Annex, (3) the interaction with other CEO-funded efforts such as CUNY Catch and GO/SO, and (4) improved communication and coordination between DOC and DOE, as reported by DOE staff and evidenced by increased meeting schedules.

<sup>17</sup> The state suspended GED testing during the 2006-2007 school year (testing only took place in September and April); therefore, no comparison is possible for that year.

<sup>18</sup> The recidivism rate was calculated using only readmits to DOC within 1 year (365 days) from the qualifying discharge date. Also, the discharge rate includes only those inmates discharged to the street, excluding those who were discharged to a state institution.

<sup>19</sup> This number appears high and we are checking into its accuracy.

<sup>20</sup> This number may be lower than expected because GED testing was also suspended in January and February of 2008.

<sup>21</sup> GED testing was suspended for part of 2006 and 2007; testing only taking place in September and April. In the 2005-2006 school year, 123 students passed the GED.

<sup>22</sup> Certificates are not provided for all vocational courses, such as barbering, in Island Academy.

<sup>23</sup> Re-admission into DOC custody is based on a head-count of returning students who had been discharged from Rikers Island during the 2007-2008 school year.

There were a number of challenges—educational, external to Rikers, and data collection—to the program in meeting these outcomes. Each is discussed below.

**Challenges to the Educational Program.** Program staff mentioned a number of challenges inside the facility, many of which are a function of correctional school programs. They include:

- Engaging inmates who have short sentences;
- Enrolling inmates as soon as they enter Rikers;
- Keeping students engaged when they do come to school;
- Getting buy-in from correctional officers that school, which is important for this population;
- Assessing inmates in an appropriate way to capture the gains from the program. Several staff questioned if testing after 150 hours was sufficient and whether shorter times would be reasonable to reflect gains. Their concern on this issue is again the often short stay of the students and capturing their progress in school records; and
- Providing services to a population with a high percentage of inmates with special education needs. Both principals and teachers expressed pride in their ability to work with this population.

Other challenges are common in many educational environments, such as getting youth to attend class consistently and to provide feedback on their experiences. A box for recommendations is available, but principals also reported taking time whenever possible to engage enrolled students in conversations to elicit additional information.

Another challenge is finding an appropriate incentive to support recruitment. The money incentive designed to increase enrollment does not appear to be working as expected. There continue to be eligible 19- to 24-year-olds who are not participating in class. When evaluators asked one focus group about the value of the incentive, the participants assumed the reference was to the movie they were being allowed to see, rather than to the stipend. When questioned further, students from both groups stated that the stipend was nice but did not influence their decision to participate in school. When asked what might get them involved in school, one student showed the moderator his two “Student of the Month” awards and explained his pride in that achievement. That award also permits the student longer visitation time. Another student volunteered the suggestion that longer visitation awards would be good incentives.

**Challenges External to Rikers.** A number of challenges external to the facility were also mentioned. One counselor mentioned that every young person leaving Rikers has a discharge plan and Follow-up Tracking Sheet. However getting the discharges to keep their appointments off-island is difficult. Another challenge is motivating youth to continue education off-island. Concerns registered by a number of participants involve the lack of access to other off-island educational programs as well as the difficulty of using existing tests (conducted by Island and Horizon Academies) by off-island educational and GED programs and upstate prison educational programs. Youth are tested for placement and as mentioned above are tested for progress (following 150 hours

of services), tested using the GED predictor test to determine where they need to concentrate, and then tested for the GED. These youth become frustrated when faced by another test, which they may have recently taken. Anecdotally, the youth have reported walking away from a program that requires them to repeat yet another test. Note that one principal stated that the Bronx Community College site of CUNY Catch was effectively accessing the on-island school records. A third challenge is tracking youth through other programs. Particularly cited was the need to build up the transfer process between the Educational Expansion Program and the three Model Education Programs for Rikers dischargees. Fourth, school personnel cited the lack of information on students' educational history when they enter DOC. For youth under 19, an extensive review of educational records is made because school is mandatory. The same search is not conducted for those 19 and over, unless they enroll in either Island or Horizon, at which point teachers search for school records.

**Data Collection Challenges.** Although data collection and reporting capacities are good, the data entry and production of reports appear to be a challenge for both Horizon Academy and Island Academy. Several data elements for reporting are maintained in different systems (both electronic and hardcopy) and software, which means that staff have to compile and organize data from several sources. This makes the reporting process time-consuming and prone to errors, and raises data validity issues. Because the DOE Automated Tracking System (ATS) does not collect data on the DOC payment incentive, vocational certification status, daily attendance, and re-admission into DOC custody, DOE staff import the ATS canned report results into Excel and add those data elements that the system does not collect, which is time-consuming, according to the staff. Each week the school submits payroll sheets to the DOC for payment of incentive that is then entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Additionally, attendance is taken daily by each teacher, collected by the data entry staff, and entered in Excel for reporting. Due to the large number of hard-copy forms students are required to complete when enrolling in on-island schools and the reliance on several systems for data entry and the production of performance reports each month, the staff responsible for the data systems at each of the schools appears to be overwhelmed.

**Provider Capacity.** Capacity varies from site to site, depending on the spaces that have been made available for the schools. For example, in Island Academy the three school facilities have different capacities. The largest school, RNDC, has a physical capacity of 501 and proposed CEO Expansion average daily attendance (ADA) of 30 inmates; in the first few months of implementation it consistently reached their ADA targets. The 195-capacity facility, EMTC, has never reached full capacity as proposed with the CEO Expansion of 90.<sup>24</sup> The facility had been used by fewer than 80 inmates, and after an incident at the school, this decreased to fewer than 50 inmates. The third facility, RMSC, has a physical capacity of 105 inmates and a proposed CEO Expansion ADA of 60; however at one point it reached 80 inmates and now is about 50 inmates. As programs in the two schools expand, classrooms are developed where possible, and space can be tight in some locations. The providers believe enrollments can be increased and their current capacity has not quite been reached. Both district staff reported that they needed to see higher average daily attendance (ADA) rates on a regular basis before requesting increased funds. ADA fluctuates quite a bit due to competition with other schedules and/or level of inmate engagement in schools, so they are never "full" during a stretch of time.

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<sup>24</sup> CEO Expansion ADA numbers are referenced in the document, Educational Services by Facility; however some adjustments were made based on discussion and comments from DOC staff that are not reflected on the spreadsheet. The RNDC physical capacity was adjusted (to 501) and the EMTC Expansion ADA (to 90).

Funding for educational programs on Rikers Island tends to be from city and state funds, and based on number of students served as of October 31 and the number of contact hours provided. In recent years, funding has been cut to these programs, particularly funds for vocational programs. CEO funded both DOE (\$1.76 million) and DOC (\$1.03 million). Additionally, the principal at Horizon reported that Panera donated food for a year in support of school events. The principal provides food at different times/events to encourage students to discuss their school experiences and needs.

**Agency Management.** Requirements for monitoring the expanded educational programs are the same as for the ongoing management of both Island and Horizon through District 79. To that end, monitoring is comparable for the entire school system. School personnel reported that the Handberry Case, a court case initiated 17 years ago regarding special educational services in Rikers, drove a wedge between DOE and DOC. The new CEO funding has improved those relations and resulted in improved coordination between DOC and DOE. More meetings are held between the two agencies to address challenges and case management. The Deputy Superintendent of District 79 makes routine visits to the two academies, sitting in on classes and meeting with principals, teachers, and resource teachers. Academy staff reported that he was readily accessible and responded to needs. DOC administrative staff work closely with wardens and assistant wardens to facilitate access to the classrooms. As stated above, additional training is provided to school corrections officers to further underscore DOC support for the educational program.

The program is capably collecting data and producing reports. Overall, DOE staff members are working hard to maintain and manage the large amount of hard-copy case-level and aggregate data for reporting requirements to CEO.

DOE data staff members at both academies prepare monthly and quarterly aggregate reports on student enrollment, ADA and performance outcomes achieved, and submit them to DOC, DOE, and CEO. Both academies use the Automatic Tracking System (ATS), a DOE mainframe database, DOC Inmate Information Tracking System (IIS), and Excel spreadsheets, to collect and verify data and report on the outcomes. The majority of the data elements collected at both academies are the same, but staff members use different methods to collect and organize the data, and the data elements on the intake/registration forms vary. The format of the monthly and quarterly reporting is the same at both schools.

To ensure that the program operates successfully, DOC reviews the monthly and quarterly data to identify operational issues requiring administrative action and change. Several data collection methods and systems are in place at both schools to collect and maintain data. It appears that data definitions are consistent across both schools, but double data entry might cause possible data validity issues in reporting. Both academies use the ATS and Excel spreadsheets to collect and report on the outcomes.

Limited numbers of staff are in place to compile and organize the data, and it is a time-consuming process to prepare reports. Personnel at each school enter and update the ATS system and maintain separate Excel spreadsheets using slightly different methods. To produce the monthly reporting, the ATS produces a monthly canned report that became available in January 2008 with case-level enrollment data, including student ID, date admitted, last and first names, date of birth, NYSID number (DOC's unique ID) assigned to all inmates, special education status, ESL and English language learner (ELL) status, intake test score at pre- and post-levels, and discharge codes. These

data are imported into Excel monthly and updated with additional data elements not maintained in ATS to produce a detailed monthly report. The additional data elements include daily attendance, DOC payment incentive amounts, type of vocational certification issued to inmate students, and re-admission into DOC custody.

The basic data elements needed for planning and monitoring performance are available in the hard-copy records and electronically through ATS, Excel, and DOC Inmate Information Tracking system (IIS). At Horizon Academy, a large amount of case-level data (e.g., student interview form, intake/transitional form, enrollment form, student daily attendance sign-in sheet obtained from teachers each day, pre- and post-GED testing, and the number of pre-GED classroom instruction hours earned) are collected and maintained in the students' hard-copy records, ATS, and Excel spreadsheet. The DOC IIS allows DOE staff members to view and look up data on inmates' next court date, facility location, discharge status (i.e., upstate, home), and type of charge.

Table 3 lists the data fields contained in the various sources of client-level data for the Educational Expansion Program.

**Table 3. DOE/DOC Client-Level Data**

<b>Data Fields</b>	<b>Hard Copy Format</b>	<b>DOE ATS Database</b>	<b>Excel</b>	<b>DOC Inmate Information Tracking System (IIS)</b>
Address (street/city/apt)	✓	✓		✓
Admission status				✓
Age	✓	✓		✓
Application date/admit date		✓		✓
Arrest date				✓
Booking and case number	✓			✓
Borough of arraignment				✓
Charge classification (e.g. felony/misdemeanor)	✓			✓
Citizen (Y/N)				✓
Country of origin	✓			✓
Court dates	✓			✓
Date of arrest	✓			✓
Date of birth		✓		✓
Date of release/discharge date	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discharge/transfer status and date	✓		✓	
Emergency contact number	✓			
Employment status	✓			
Ethnicity	✓			
Facility name	✓	✓		✓
First name		✓		✓
GED pass/fail/withdraw	✓	✓	✓	
Gender	✓			✓
High school diploma or GED received	✓	✓		
Highest grade completed	✓			
History of infractions (score 7)				✓
History of prior conviction (score 3)				✓

Data Fields	Hard Copy	DOE ATS		DOC Inmate
	Format	Database	Excel	Information Tracking System (IIS)
History of violence (score 5)				✓
Home phone number	✓			
Indication of prior incarceration	✓			
Indictment No.				✓
Vocational certification	✓	✓	✓	
Last name		✓		✓
Length of stay (days from admit to discharge)				
Length of stay (time from sentence to discharge)	✓			✓
Marital Status				✓
Medical alert	✓			
Name of group home	✓			
Name of last school attended	✓			
Name of parent guardian	✓			
Number of hours attendance	✓		✓	
NYSID	✓	✓		✓
OSIS#	✓	✓		
Other goals	✓			
Pass-GED, college enrollment or training referral	✓	✓	✓	
Population status (e.g., homeless, unemployed, HS graduate, etc.)	✓			
Predictor post-test level and score	✓	✓	✓	
Predictor pre-test level and score	✓	✓	✓	
Pre-GED hours; GED class hours	✓	✓	✓	
Primary language	✓			
Probation/parole officer	✓			
Public assistance status	✓	✓		✓
Race	✓			
Referred by	✓		✓	
Sentences				✓
Severity of top charge				✓
Short-term goals	✓			
Social Security number	✓			✓
Special education status	✓	✓	✓	
Student ID		✓		
Students interest in school	✓			
TABE post-test level and score	✓	✓	✓	
TABE pre-test level and score	✓	✓	✓	
Top charge (at admission)				✓
Total bail				✓
Type of GED program enrollment	✓			
Warrant type				✓
Zip code (inmate previous address)	✓	✓		✓

**Conclusions.** As implemented, the Educational Expansion Program on Rikers Island, sponsored by DOE and DOC, is in alignment with the CEO mission and is meeting key CEO criteria. Other considerations for continued implementation include the following.

- 1) The program succeeded in increasing the number of youth served above the 380-seat Expansion capacity. The increases in service were larger for the 22- to 24-year-olds than the 19- to 21-year-olds; however, this may be a reflection of the larger number of inmates in the older category. Additional information about length of time in Rikers by age group and ways to get the attention of these targeted inmates should be considered.
- 2) Improved communication between DOC and DOE personnel contributed to the successful enrollment. The program needs to take advantage of these improvements to increase school ADA rates.
- 3) Specific and measurable outcomes have been specified for the program. DOE and DOC have the ability to capture the outcomes specified and are doing so.
- 4) The decision to conduct vocational programs during school breaks was positively received by members of the focus group. Additional certificate-level programs would be positively received in the environment and provide constructive activities during stressful times.

### **Programmatic Recommendations**

A number of recommendations resulted from the program review.

- As the programs turn their attention to increasing ADA rates, other options for boosting enrollment should be considered, possibly using corrections officers or other appropriate staff within Island Academy.
- To improve the hand-off between on- and off-island programs, schedule planning sessions over the next few months with educational and counseling staff from both Horizon and Island Academies in order to solidify a productive working relationship with these DOE schools for the purpose of outreach and recruitment and program planning and design. For example, ensure NYC Justice Corps and Employment Works information is available to the two schools.
- Experiment with different incentives for increasing both enrollment and retention. These could be monetary incentives for achieving milestones such as completing 75 hours of educational services, passing the predictor test, passing any given section of the predictor test,<sup>25</sup> or being the first to finish a particularly difficult book or assignment; an award for tutoring another student; or other incentives, such as movies, popcorn, cookies, or extended visitation hours.
- Set up a meeting with DOC and DOE to review decisions on selection of case-level data for the extended evaluation. This would include ADA and enrollment and performance

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<sup>25</sup> Focus group participants mentioned that they became depressed when they did not pass the predictor test and just wanted to give up. Providing a small incentive to students for passing any section of the test might mitigate those feelings.

outcomes from the ATS database and IIS database. Identify electronic versus hard-copy data (e.g., the Request for Education Services form) and specify how the evaluation can support ongoing data management efforts, such as data entry for hard copy forms. The meeting should indicate scheduled dates for data routinely collected and tentative dates for other data requests.

- Currently summer school is held only for students with special needs. Consider implementing summer classes for all target inmates, so that school is held year round. The obstacles to date have been (1) insufficient budget, and (2) the need for union approval and teacher agreement to teach during the summer months. However, the Westat/Metis team believes that given the target population's needs, and the fact that the inmates would be present and as available for classes during summer as they are the rest of the year, steps should be taken to obtain the necessary funding and teacher involvement to offer year-round classes.