

Florida Department
of Corrections



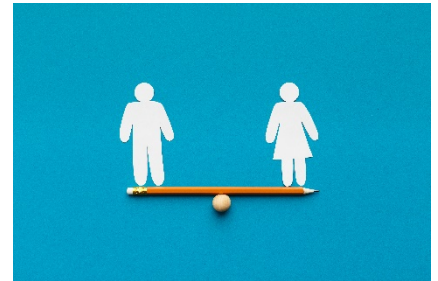
Innovations in Correctional Special Education

By Anna Schubarth
Presented by Dr. Noah Mueller

Who we are

Anna Schubarth

- Special Education Programs Administrator,
Florida Department of Corrections



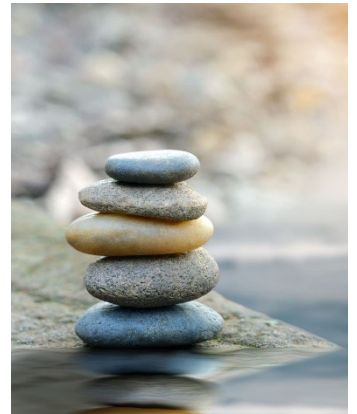
Dr. Noah Mueller

- Special Education Specialist, Regions 3 & 4,
Florida Department of Corrections



Outline

- Special Education in Corrections, BP (before pandemic)
- July 2019 – December 2019
- Covid-19 Pandemic, 2020
- Innovation through Desperation
- Special Education in Corrections Today
- Future Plans



Special Education in Corrections, BP (before pandemic)

Reception and the Child Find Process:

Every individual <22yrs of age is interviewed for an educational history.

If they have been identified as a Student with Disabilities(SWD) in public schools prior to incarceration, they are provided with additional documentation and are scheduled to be housed at an institution that provides special education services.



Special Education in Corrections, BP (before pandemic)

At the permanent camp, SWDs are given the opportunity to include a family member or advocate as part of their IEP Team, the IEP Team is convened, and an IEP is developed for the adult student.

Special Education Teachers, Assistants, General Education Teachers, and Career and Technical Education Teachers work together to provide the services listed on the student's IEP. FAPE is provided for each student and every IEP is individualized to meet the needs of the student.



Special Education in Corrections, BP (before pandemic)

Services are provided

- In the classroom,
- In pull-out sessions individually or in small groups

For students requiring behavioral supports, Special Education Teachers provide anger management and self-awareness/self-control strategies.

For students requiring speech and language services, the Department has a Speech and Language Pathologist position. The incumbent travels *throughout the state* providing evaluations and making recommendations for IEP goals. This position is subject to a high rate of turnover for a variety of reasons.



July 2019 – December 2019

An idea!

Partner with Florida State University Art Therapy program to provide certified Art Therapists at a limited number of Special Education prisons.

The Art Therapists provide behavioral consultation services including one-on-one and small group sessions.

The goals and expectations for this program were

- Increase the amount of time students spent in the classroom by providing an outlet for expression
- Within a year of launch there would be a meaningful reduction in the number and/or severity of disciplinary reports



July 2019 – December 2019

The Art Therapy program was completed in July 2019.

Two Art Therapists were hired to provide services at four institutions.

Art supplies in a prison?

Who would be enrolled?

Where is this going to go?

Up and running for ~ 1 month until Covid.



July 2019 –
December
2019

What about the Speech and Language Therapist?

Contract that position because it would be of greater benefit to the students.

Bid process – 2 providers.

Short-term interim emergency contract

3-year contract to begin when the interim ends

A provision for tele-counseling services was included in the interim contract to test the delivery of this type of service in a more direct manner than had been possible under a single Department employee.

Monitors with integrated cameras and microphones were approved by security and purchased for the permanent institutions.





July 2019 –
December
2019

Integrated monitors (cameras and microphones) approved by security

Use the interim contract to test the delivery of this type of service in a more direct manner than had been possible under a single Department employee.

Let the tele-counseling begin!



And then came Covid

Quarantine lockdowns – dorms, and sometimes entire institutions, were placed on restricted or no movement to prevent, contain, and control the spread of the virus. For this purpose, the process was necessary. However, the unintended results quickly became apparent.

As with public schools, the Department struggled with finding ways to continue classes and special education services without breaking quarantine. Unlike public schools, our students do not have internet, or even in house network, access.



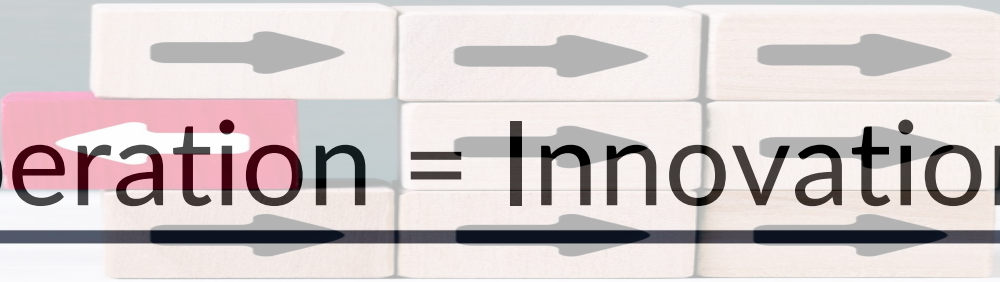
And then came Covid

The Art Therapy program had barely begun regular face-to-face sessions with the students experiencing behavioral challenges.

The Speech and Language Pathologists had just started to get equipment installed and their proprietary software distributed to the institutions.

IEPs requiring 15, 30, 60, 120 minutes per week of in-person services were in place – but providers were kept from interacting directly with the students for everyone's safety.



A stack of wooden blocks with arrows pointing right. The top row has three light-colored blocks. The bottom row has three light-colored blocks, with the first one being red. The text 'Desperation = Innovation' is overlaid on the blocks.

Desperation = Innovation

- Laptops were used within the dorms to provide required speech and language services with the assistance of dorm officers.
- Individualized work packets were created by Academic and Special Education Teachers – delivered by internal mail or limited open-air access observing CDC protocols for masking and distancing.
- But how could Art Therapy modify their services to this unusual situation?



Desperation = Innovation

In an unprecedented effort, the Art Therapists worked together to create a paper-based packet system delivered through internal “mail”.

The packets contained

- An explanation of the directive
- Space to complete the exercise
- Space for the Therapist to provide individualized feedback.



Desperation = Innovation

Where do these packets go? Follow the students.

- Infirmaries
- Dorms on quarantine or lockdown
- Confinement
- Close management/restrictive housing



Surprising Results

- Participants reported that the limited contact was “better than nothing”.
- It helped them work on their feelings
 - Uncertainty of family status
 - Worry about contracting the virus
 - Anxiety from being in constant close quarters.
- Individuals not in the program began requesting the Art Therapy packets, and this aspect of the program expanded rapidly.



Surprising Results

- Staff reports from dorms with a large number of regular participants
 - Good direction for nervous energy
 - Improved the morale
- Participants began using the packets to communicate their fears and frustrations, allowing for improved feedback from the Therapists.
- Time spent per student or group remained comparable with pre-Covid levels, but the scope of the project reached over 3 times as many individuals as could be served in person.



Art Therapy by Workbook

Goals

- Maintain contact and foster a sense of connection amid global pandemic
- Offer contained and accessible art making opportunities despite challenges and limitations related to global pandemic and cessation of programming
- Improve self-awareness and encourage acknowledgement and acceptance of present self and circumstances
- Promote self-regulation skills and decrease negative affect/symptoms
- Increase positive coping skills



Art Therapy by Visual Journal

- 12-page booklet with instructions, explanations, and directives to guide each prompt.
- Scheduled for weekly pickup and delivery, with feedback provided the following week along with tailored prompts to promote individual progress.



Draw a picture showing what you are
currently worried about.



A cathartic exercise intended to build:

- Self-awareness and self-expression
- Externalize negative thoughts and emotions
- Create emotional distance and safe reflection.

This practice is shown to help bolster one's ability to let go of things outside of one's control.

Create a picture of what helps you feel better when you're feeling down.



This directive encourages self-exploration, self-awareness, empowers the individual to assume responsibility of self, increase ability to take positive action, and increase positive coping skills.

Draw and/or write about something you really wish you could tell or explain to your teachers, friends, or family member?



Creating a visual representation of internal thought processes provides a platform for *effective communication* and development of an internal locus of control.

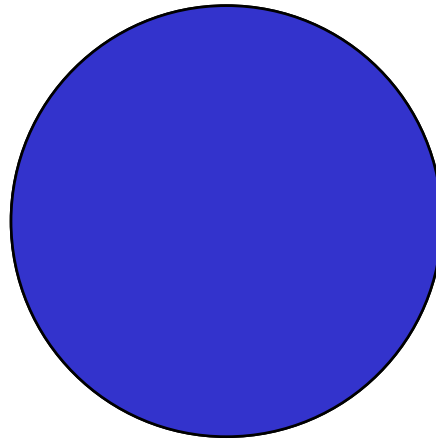
Using the paper provided, draw a picture of yourself
as something other than a person.

The next slide contains a 5-minute timer for this activity.



Using the paper provided, draw a picture of yourself
as something other than a person.

5 minutes



Directive Rationale

This moderately structured directive allows creative thought about the self and encourages both creative and symbolic thinking.

The benefits may include:

- increased self-awareness
- improved creative problem-solving skills
- development of positive coping skills
- development of communication skills
- increased self-worth/self-esteem.



The New Normal

- We a contracted Speech and Language provider that utilizes only tele-services.
- Streamlined the provision of services and allowed direct student/therapist interaction via a controlled network connection.
- Moved away from the consultation-only model and teacher-led work
- Individualized frequency and duration of services and therapist input in every IEP for a student with speech or language impairment.



The New Normal

- Building on the success of the Art Therapy program, we now have 4 contracted therapists and Art Therapy related behavioral services in 9 of our permanent special education institutions.
- The Art Therapy programs focus on Student With Disabilities, but may include other additional students
- One of the expanded programs is with the expectant mother population. This group has limited opportunities for creative outlet and emotional support – the Art Therapy program provides both.



Future Plans

The sudden onset of the pandemic required rapid adaptation. We are reviewing those adaptations and determining what worked (and what didn't).

Learn from our failures and build upon our successes.

Our instructional staff have improved skills regarding individualizing student work, both in class and in restrictive housing.

Our Special Education staff are now better at recording student absences and gaps in service provision, and a process of “making up” missed services is in place.

Where do we go now?



Future Plans

- Increase the type and accessibility of tele-services.
 - Behavioral Therapy
 - Remote access to general education lessons
- Provide and train on usage of current technology and expand the use of technology within classrooms and restrictive environments.
 - Large 20-point contact touch-screen televisions in classrooms to replace outdated smart board technology.
 - Monitors with integrated audio/video for provision of tele-services
 - Laptops and external microphones for provision of tele-services in restrictive settings
 - Access to academic coursework in multiple formats – on inmate tablets, on dorm televisions, via tele-communication, in small group and individual settings in the restrictive housing units, and in traditional classrooms



Future Plans

- Open lines of communication between all levels of staff to encourage sharing of innovative ideas and guide best practices
 - Frequent, regularly scheduled online office hours with the state special education programs administrator designated as a safe space to discuss any challenges and successes and ask any questions. All special education related staff invited, attendance is optional – never required. Improving communication and networking with all levels of staff.
 - Regularly scheduled online meetings conducted by regional staff with field staff, improving teamwork and networking.
 - “Always Available” policy. State-level administrator policy of dropping everything to take field staff calls emphasizes their importance to the team.
- Develop guidance for staff faced with unfamiliar situations.
 - Creation, and frequent updating, of desk manuals for all levels of staff.
 - Swift dissemination of written guidance when new situations are encountered.
 - Regional and Statewide training events, both in-person and virtual, to ensure staff are up to date with current expectations and procedural changes.

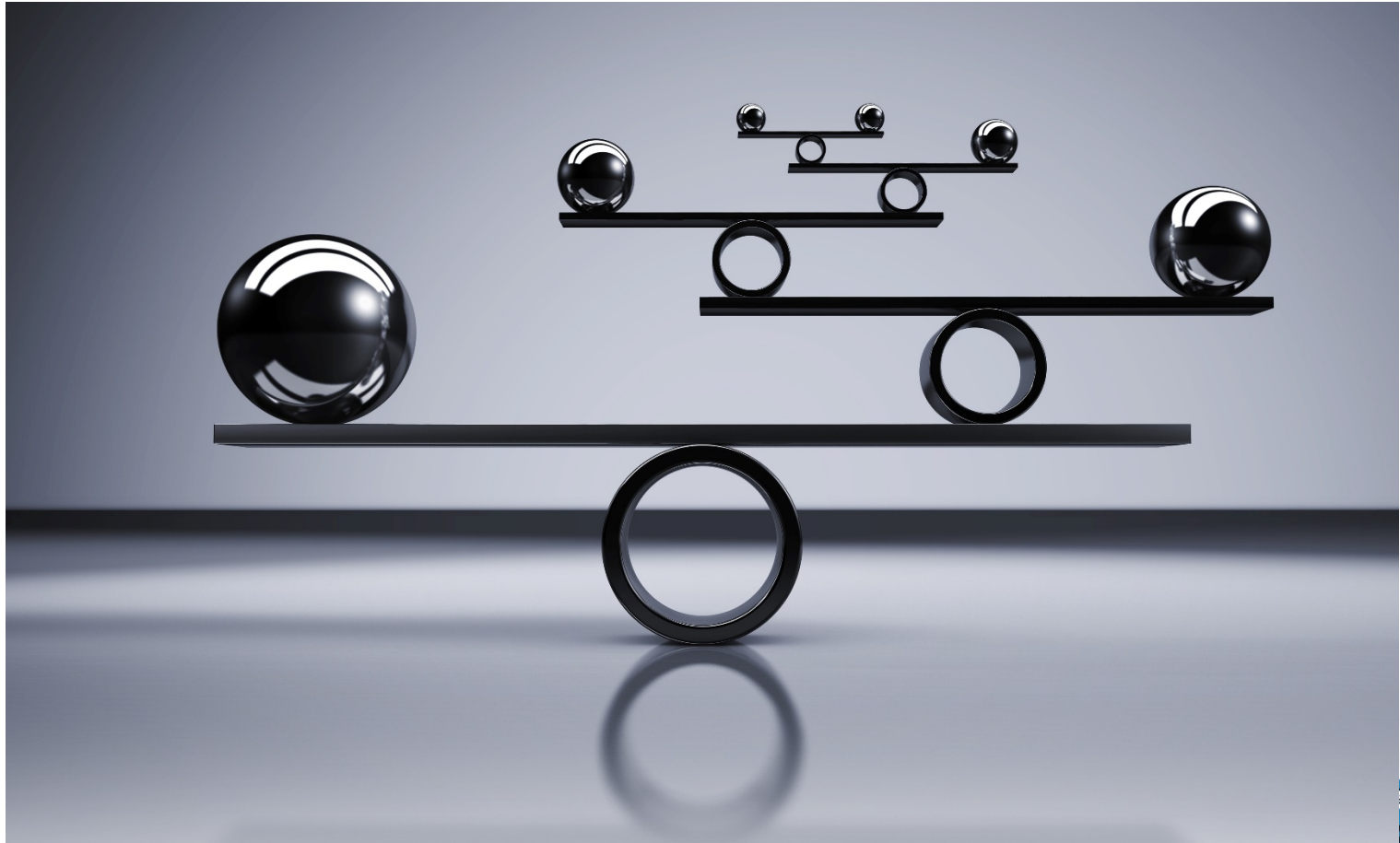


References

- Barlow, C., Soape, E., Gussak, D., Schubarth, A. (in press). Mitigating Over-Isolation: Beginning a New Art Therapy in Prisons Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Art Therapy: The Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*.
- Soape, E., Barlow, C., Gussak, D., Brown, J., & Schubarth, A. (2021). Creative IDEA: Introducing a statewide art therapy in prison program. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. DOI: 10.1177/0306624X211013731 Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0306624X211013731#>
- Gussak, D., Brown, J., Barlow, C., & Soape, E. (2020). *Annual Report and Evaluation*. Tallahassee: Florida State University/Florida Department of Corrections.
- Gussak, D., Schubarth, A., Barlow, C., & Soape, E. (2021). *Annual Report and Evaluation*. Tallahassee: Florida State University/Florida Department of Corrections.



Questions?



Thank you for your time and attention.

If you have questions about Special Education in the Florida Department of Corrections, or have ideas for additional innovations, please contact:

Anna Schubarth
Special Education Programs Administrator
anna.schubarth@fdc.myflorida.com

If you have questions about Art Therapy inside or outside of a correctional setting, please contact:

Dave Gussak, Ph.D.
Professor of Art Therapy & Clinical Coordinator
Department of Art Education
dgussak@fsu.edu



My sincere thanks to Dr. Noah Mueller for presenting this information on my behalf. Please be kind to him in your session surveys!

