

Using Creative Writing and Literacy to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

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Abstract

My research looks at the school to prison pipeline and how it has started and affected students, particularly minorities and students with a disability. I also looked at possible ways to help dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, focusing on the use of literacy and creative writing programs in schools.

Introduction

After zero-tolerance policies were introduced into the American school system in the 1990's, the number of students who have been funneled into the prison system has skyrocketed. More than 250,000 juveniles are currently in the juvenile detention system, 85% of them are functionally illiterate. Being incarcerated is not helping these students and we need to find a way to help these students out of the prison system and prepare them for life outside of the juvenile detention center. One way I propose we do this is implement creative writing and reading programs into all schools, not just the prison system. Creative writing and reading provides students a safe outlet to express themselves. By implementing evidence based writing and reading programs, it is proven that there are lower recidivism rates among students in the prison system and these students are able to cope with past trauma. Creative writing also helps students become more empathetic to others and more involved in their community.

Their mental health drastically improves and they often go on to pursue more schooling after being released.

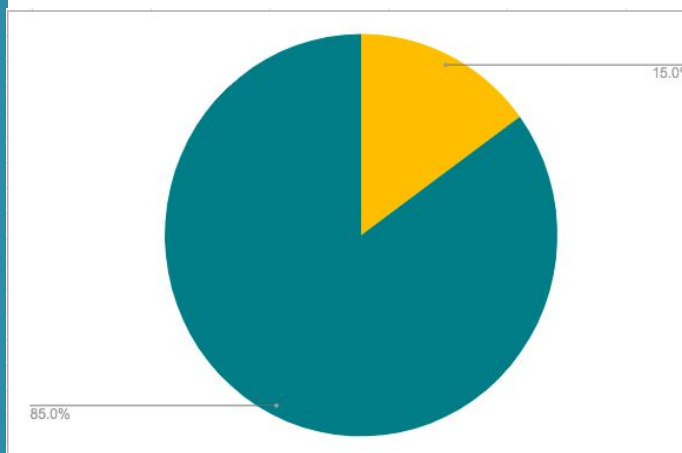
Literature Review

According to articles and literature that I have read, I found that creative writing programs or workshops help lower recidivism rates among juveniles. I have found that these programs have lower recidivism rates as well as improve their inmates mental health. By lowering recidivism rates, this also lowers the number of individuals being funneled into the prison system.

Research Overview/Methods

I looked at different creative writing programs and saw that one of the main things that came up was that often these students are functionally illiterate. I also spent time researching how creative writing lowers recidivism and keeps juveniles out of the juvenile justice system. One thing I found is that the number of juveniles being put into the prison system has more than doubled since zero tolerance policies were implemented into the school system. This chart shows the functional illiteracy rate for juveniles in the prison system. Out of 250,000 juveniles, data showed that 85% of them are considered functionally illiterate. Some programs have found as much as a 61% decrease in prison numbers after individuals

Some programs have found as much as a 61% decrease in prison numbers after individuals have been involved in a writing or reading program for five or more years. 58% of individuals also said that being involved in these programs helped them grow closer to support systems.



Discussion/ Results

Findings/Results:

My findings showed that schools and prisons that adopted creative writing and reading programs into their schools had lower rates of disruptive behavior as well as their students being able to adjust better to the public school system. Studies also showed that not enough schools are implementing these programs and that a bigger

push needs to be made for all schools to adopt these programs. When these programs are implemented, the number of students entering the prison system is decreased.

Limitations

There currently is not a lot of research on how creative writing and reading programs are impacting the prison system.

Implications

Consequently, more research on the creation of and the implementation of creative writing and reading programs is needed in order to accurately measure the effectiveness of the program. Doing so could possibly lead to a decrease in the number of juveniles being funneled into the prison system. If detention centers leverage their resources and allocate their funding to bring these programs to their settings, it might lead to a more positive outcome for the population that they serve, foster empathy, allow students to truly see their potential to creatively express themselves, while also decreasing recidivism

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