**M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS**Making Active Steps Toward Education Rehabilitation:  
A Program Plan

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**Introduction**

According to Baltodano, Platt, and Roberts (2005), of the 2.8 million youth arrested each year, around 90,000 are incarcerated in institutions throughout the United States. On average, 60% are detained for outstanding warrants (i.e., failing to test for drug use, testing positive to drugs, or missing school) and 40% are detained for delinquent or incorrigible acts. Many of the youth arrested—around 34.4%—were found to have disabilities. Thus special education programs and services were designed to help rehabilitate these youth. However, that leaves around 65.6% troubled youth not receiving specialized care (Baltodano et al., 2005). Black (2005) mentions a saying about the centers having a “revolving door”. Many youth who’ve left the centers will return a few to multiple times in their lifetime. That puts pressure on the education resources to be consistent and able to work with different histories of different youth so that they can find success and not find themselves back in the center (Black, 2005). In order to receive this coveted level of help, many youth are sent to alternative education programs. Unfortunately, as Van Acker (2007) found, even with alternative style help, youth in these environments have been shown to exhibit more sexual and physical abuse, as well as delinquent behavior than their public and private school peers (Van Acker, 2007).

According to Nelson, C., Jolivette, K., Leone, P. E., & Mathur, S. R. (2010), because of their delinquent behavior, instead of helping the youth improve their lifestyles at home or in the comfort of their local communities, many programs and services find helping to be too strenuous and send the youth to juvenile detention centers instead. The removal of troubled youth into juvenile detention centers have become a “cop-out” for programs and services overwhelmed by the needs of the youth they serve. These centers began in the United States to refocus youth who do not behave appropriately in society. Today, they are used as a prison and a mental hospital for abandoned (the program or service gave up on them) youth. Sending all troubled youth to centers does not necessarily mean that those centers will do a better job than the last organization (Nelson et al., 2010). In fact, as Kohler and Reese (2008) have stated, education in detention centers are found to be lacking. In the state of Arkansas, 80% of the students serving time were three to five years behind in math and reading. A program known as JEdI (Juvenile Education Initiative) was developed to gather appropriate data about the educational needs of youth inmates and develop curricula based on the findings. Since it began, all juvenile detention centers are required to have similar initiatives and the usage has gone outside of the centers, reaching out to youth before and after incarceration (Kohler and Reese, 2008). Along with helping the youth while incarcerated, Baltodano, H. M., Platt, D., & Roberts, C. W. (2005) note the need for effective methods of transition from the secure care of the centers back in to the youths’ communities. These methods need to help make the youth aware of their circumstances and how to move forward. After all, if they don’t move forward, they’ll only end right back in the centers to repeat the process all over again (Baltodano et al., 2005).

But the question still remains; how effective are the programs and services offered to troubled youth to keep them *out* of the system? Especially for the 65.6% (as was explained above) of non-special education affiliated. Nearly 20 years ago, the question about how effective programs and services were for troubled youth unqualified for special education was investigated by Fredericks (1994). It was found that programs and services acted alone and did not acknowledge the need for youth to have multiple levels of help in different areas.

This inability to unify the different programs and services caused the youth to not receive the full potential of help at their disposal (Fredericks, 1994).

Obviously, there are hundreds of different circumstances and hundreds of different needs for hundreds of different youth. No program will ever be perfect and the fact that rehabilitation can occur is already a large feat for the troubled youth. But it is important to continuously search for more effective methods, one step at a time. I believe placing a non-Special Education-affiliated “life skills” program into schools (not just as a lesson plan, but as its own, stand-alone entity) would help increase rehabilitation and prevention effectiveness. This program will be known as the *M.A.S.T.E.R.* (Making Active Steps Toward Educational Rehabilitation) *CLASS*.

**Community/Needs Assessment Plan**

The research for the development of M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS, will be conducted in the rural county of Snohomish in Washington State. In order to understand what the community needs are in regards to the topic discussed above, I will begin collecting baseline data through various surveys, interviews, and a community forum. For my data collection approach, utilizing both *qualitative* and *quantitative* measures will be most efficient. *Qualitative baseline data* will be collected by conducting interviews with youth in the local juvenile detention centers on what they feel their needs are, as well as interviews with local law enforcement, youth workers, and school faculty and employees to determine how they feel the programs that are already in place have been succeeding and/or struggling. *Quantitative baseline data* will be gathered from surveys sent out to the community and with law enforcement and public officials. These surveys will ask questions about how often juvenile delinquency occurs, what kind it is, and where it happens. It will also ask questions of the life skills and anti-bullying/gang programs and lesson plans offered in the community and at the schools. Finally, a community forum will open at the end of the surveys to reiterate some of the questions asked in the interviews and surveys.

Stakeholders will consist of anyone involved with schools (i.e., superintendents, school faculty and employees, parents, students, case workers and managers, developmental specialists; etc.) and public safety (i.e., police, juvenile detention employees, incarcerated youth, and other public safety authorities). Considering the various cultural and historical backgrounds of the potential beneficiaries of the program, I would ask the adults involved with caring for these you a variety of questions. First, I would want to know how long they had been working in their programs and positions. Then, it is important to learn what background training they have in relation to working with troubled youth. Third, where they believe the programs they are involved with succeed or fail to meet the needs of said youth. Forth, what changes they would like to see be made or that they think would benefit their programs. Finally, I would want to know how youth with special education and youth without special education compare in progress toward individual goals.

**Project program description and design**

Now, the overall goal (as broken down in Figure 1) of M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS is very simple:  Students reentering society/school after a period of detention/incarceration will have the supports that they need to become fully productive citizens in the 21st century. In order to build a successful program in schools, first, an available facility must be located. Preferably, the facility will be a classroom (but if none are available, the gym or a conference room will be utilized). Then a curriculum must be written up. This step will be where the most input from stakeholders will be taken in to consideration. Based on the community and needs assessments, a board of stakeholders and I will implement a life skills curriculum. Also, training on rehabilitation counseling must occur. This could occur at Everett Community College, through Western Washington University’s Rehabilitation Counseling program, at the local Denny Way Juvenile Detention Center with professionals, through the Monroe Correctional Complex, any private rehabilitation counseling professional’s office, or a combination of all four. Once the base training and curriculum development is out of the way, resources (i.e. educators, educational material, finances; etc.) must be decided upon and located. The search for resources will be greatly supported by marketing to different organizations and sister programs. Marketing (posters, emails, newsletters, community announcements; etc.) will also be effective in helping to make the program’s presence known and fill the seats with the youth it aims to serve. Planning a fundraiser will be continuous through the program’s initial development and future existence. Stakeholders, community partners, and resource-holders will all be a part of the fundraising. Finally, along with fundraising, development of scholarships for students will be planned, marketed, and implemented. Scholarships will include those for future collegiate (first generation or top of class) and excellence in community outreach.

As it has been made clear, the target population is that of troubled and/or delinquent youth (primarily, but not limited to, youth who have been incarcerated). The specific age range of students will be ages 12-18 (though, there will be separate divisions for middle school, junior high, and high school youth). The geographic area will include inner cities, but will be more focused on rural areas with less local programs designed to rehabilitate incarcerated youth (i.e. Snohomish County). Each student affiliated with the program will have the opportunity of being a participant from the moment of entrance (upon returning from incarceration and signing up) through the rest of their intermediate and secondary-level school career. Graduation from program will occur at the end of a student’s Senior (12th grade) year. The program will follow the local school calendar, with opportunities for community outreach when school is not in session. The site will be open 30 minutes prior to school beginning and at least one hour after school has ended. Based on a student’s needs, as in special education, they may only attend one session a day or they might stay at the site for the majority of the school hours.

**Implementation**

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**Month 1 (June)**

The first priority is to contact and set up individual and group meetings with Denny Way Juvenile Detention Center life skill and rehabilitation specialists, Snohomish County Police Department, Snohomish School District, and the Monroe School District to discuss and plan a life skills curriculum for juveniles reentering society (those that attend the group meetings will become part of the “planning committee”. This will also be the time to determine the program location by submitting paperwork to rent facilities at both school districts. Finally, contact will be made with potential organizations (Cocoon House, Service Alternatives, Inc., YMCA of Snohomish County, Boys & Girls Club; etc.) that could provide grants and begin creating pamphlets and posters to advertise and promote the program around the county.

**Month 2 (July)**

As planning the curriculum draws to a close, the planning committee will begin a background check and interviewing process with potential staff and faculty. Those that are found to have enough credentials and ability to work with the target population will then be required to update any certificates that the planning committee deems necessary and start learning the curriculum (this will be a continual process).

**Month 3 (August)**

Publicity about the program will begin with a follow up community forum to the original that occurred during the community assessment. There, the M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS will be revealed and afterward, emails, pamphlets, school board announcements, and word-of-mouth will spread the knowledge of the program throughout the county. A sign-up sheet to register will also become available in the office and websites of the affiliated school(s) and at any organization with youth-centered programs and activities. The planning committee will also develop a summative survey to be distributed at the end of each semester to students, parents, and teachers on success and failures of the program. Finally, finances will begin to be sorted out and initial supplies will be obtained (to be determined; possibly basic educational supplies such as portable whiteboards and curriculum workbooks).

**Month 4 (September)**

Prior to school beginning, the budget for the year will be finalized and all remaining resources will be purchased. A week before the school year begins at all affiliated schools, there will be an Open House to allow parents and students to tour the facility and receive an orientation on the program. Then, school will have begun by the second week of September, and so the M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS will begin.

**Future Challenges**

Working with a vulnerable population such as previously incarcerated youth brings many challenges. There is the chance that the M.A.S.T.E.R. class will not be able to support every student’s individual needs. Because of social stigma, we may even find ourselves with a high overturn rate of employees from the stress and negative reactions from non-program affiliated parents who do not feel safe with previously incarcerated youth being allowed in schools with their children. Finally, the chosen yearly funds might prove to not be enough (as is the usual case in an educational setting).

**Evaluation Plan**

The evaluation plan will consist of surveys, instructor performance reviews, and conferences with each students’ case worker, parent/guardian, and probation officer. Surveying the youth before and after joining the program will determine how much fun they are having and what they like/dislike about the program. The instructor performance reviews will confirm whether or not students are learning the proposed curriculum and if something within the program structure needs to be changed (i.e. change of instructor or moving the curriculum around). The conferences will be similar to an IEP (individualized education plan, as used in Special Education) and determine the current needs of each individual students, suggested ways to meet them, and progress toward goals in and outside of schools.

**Program budgets**

As detailed in Figure 2, the main source of income for the M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS will be funding through the school districts. There will also be opportunity for funding from local youth-oriented programs, such as the Boys & Girls Club and YMCA of Snohomish County—both of which provide many before and after school enrichment programs for youth, Cocoon House, which serves homeless and endangered youth of Snohomish County, and Service, Alternatives, Inc., a human service organization that provides group homes for troubled and endangered populations. All other expenses are based off of the 2012-2013 Final Executive Summary from Monroe Public Schools, which breaks down funds for every program affiliated with the school district.

**Conclusion**

The M.A.S.T.E.R. CLASS has the potential to change lives if implemented correctly. Not only can “delinquent” youth gain the courage to walk toward a brighter future, the surrounding community will become more unified in encouraging and supporting these youth. Through the guidance of the planning committee, a life skills class designed for previously incarcerated youth in the community they originated from will allow that population to become reintegrated said community and (potentially) break the “revolving door” cycle.

As a program within the school curriculum, with support from a variety of donors (as listed early on), the program has the great potential of being sustainable. Not all school programs survive, but when they change the negative outcome of a student’s future into something *positive*, you can bet the community will rally together to defend something great. That is the ultimate skill this program hopes its chosen population walks away with—confidence to *change the world*.

# FIGURE 1: LOGIC MODEL

# Program: \_\_\_\_\_M.A.S.T.E.R. – Making Active Steps Toward Educational Rehabilitation)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Initiative Goal:** Students reentering society/school after a period of detention/incarceration will have the supports that they need to become fully productive citizens in the 21st century.

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| **Inputs** |  | **Outputs** | |  | Outcomes -- Impact | | | |
|  | *Activities* | *Participation* |  | Short | Medium | Long | |
| Sponsors for students  Educators and School Administrators  Law Enforcement  Parents  Rehabilitated Inmates  Sister Programs |  | Locate School/Facility Availability (classroom)  Write Curriculum  Training on rehabilitation counseling  Resource Recruitment  Marketing  Plan Fundraisers/ Sponsorship for Students | Student-led facilitation  A reward system for attendance (to be decided upon)  1.Class room activities that encourage/promote:  Trust Building & Morale Building  Life Skills:  -Financial  -Job  -Communicative  -Hygiene  2.Community Outreach |  | Confidence Building  Skill Building for the real world  80% of students will master anger management techniques by creating a least restrictive environment for themselves | 80% Graduation from Middle/Junior/High School  Students will have a basic resume to build from  100% of students will have the skills to maintain their least restrictive environment | | 100% will volunteer/work for this or similar programs  85% will abandon delinquent activities  **Overarching Impact:** *100% of students will use skills developed to help others in similar crisis and promote change* |

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| **Assumptions** |  | **External Factors** |
| Not everyone in the community will be supportive  The program will not be effective for everyone  The assumption that these youth even need such a program  That the educators do not have the proper skills at this time. | The factors that led each individual to engage in delinquent behavior will still be present Have to follow school schedule (time limits) |

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FIGURE 2

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| **REVENUE** |  |
| Request Grants from Monroe School District, Snohomish School District, Cocoon House, Service Alternatives; Inc, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club | Min $800,000.00/academic year  (Min will come from school districts) |
| Fundraising | $100,000.00/academic year goal |
| **Total Income (Academic Year):** | **Min $900,000.00** |
| **EXPENSES** |  |
| Counselor/Coordinator | $165,000.00/academic year  (7 associated counselors within district = $23,572/academic year per staff) |
| Rental of School Facility | $0.00 |
| Staff Salary | $260,000.00/academic year  (13 staff persons = $20,000/yr per staff) |
| Brochure and Pamphlet Printing (uprinting.com) | $186.38 (for 250 tri-fold brochures) $186.38 x 3 = $559.14/yr |
| Local and Campus Publicity | $0.00 |
| Poster Printing | $48.88 (for 50 “11 x “17 products)  $48.88 x 3 = $146.64/year |
| Equipment and Supplies (i.e. education materials) | $800,000.00 |
| **Total Expenses:** | **$1,650,421.64/academic year** |

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