Illinois Youth Center-Pere Marquette (IYC-Pere Marquette) is a minimum security facility for male youth in the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ). IYC-Pere Marquette is the only IDJJ facility with an open campus, meaning that there are no fences enclosing the institution. Pere Marquette is located on the southwest side of Illinois, approximately an hour outside of St. Louis, Missouri.

**Vital Statistics:**

**Population:** 33  
**Average Age:** 17.2

**Population by race:**  
- White: 10 (30.3%),  
- Black: 19 (57.6%),  
- Latino/Hispanic: 1 (3%),  
- Two or more races: 3 (9.1%)

**Committing offense:**  
- Class X felonies: 3 (9.1%),  
- Class 1 felonies: 14 (42.4%),  
- Class 2 felonies: 11 (33.3%),  
- Class 3 felonies: 5 (15.1%)

Key Observations:

- The ratio of mental health staff to youth is high, which enables mental health providers to have a low weekly caseload. This low caseload provides the opportunity for mental health staff to interact with youth outside of therapy.

- Because of the low security concerns with youth and because of strong collaborative partnerships between local community organizations, IYC-Pere Marquette provides many opportunities for programming as well as vocational training opportunities both inside and outside the facility.

- Pere Marquette administration has made a concerted effort to remove barriers to youth contacting their families. They have a very flexible visitation policy, they frequently include family members on facility events, and allow youth to make several free phone calls each month.
• In addition to utilizing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program with fidelity to the model, IYC-Pere Marquette has developed additional incentives to motivate youth to engage in positive behavior in the institution.

• To help youth who may be experiencing a crisis or who may be aggressive, youth have access to a “time out” room to de-escalate and calm down. The room is frequently utilized and is well-received by youth.
Executive Summary

The John Howard Association (JHA) conducted a full monitoring visit of Illinois Youth Center (IYC)-Pere Marquette (Pere Marquette) on Tuesday, May 15th, 2018. As one of the smaller of facilities run by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ), IYC-Pere Marquette has the staff and resource capacity to provide their youth with timely, comprehensive, and individualized services.

IYC-Pere Marquette exemplifies the benefits of a low-security, smaller facility on the rehabilitation of justice-involved youth. Pere Marquette keeps youth engaged in programming and activities throughout the day, leaving little idle time in the youth’s cells. Programming ranges from vocational training, both inside and outside the facility, monthly activities based on a central theme, and visits to outside venues, among other programs.

In addition to keeping youth active and engaged throughout the day, IYC-Pere Marquette focuses on rewarding positive youth behavior and in preventing disruptions in the facility. In addition to the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, IYC-Pere Marquette has developed additional incentives to motivate youth to engage in positive behavior in the institution. Youth are offered special meals, excursions, as well as other privileges for continued good behavior in the facility. Youth are also provided a place and opportunity to express their concerns and work on solutions through a Youth Council, a youth-led meeting held weekly involving all staff and youth in the facility. To prevent youth disruptions, administrators at Pere Marquette prioritize positive youth-staff interactions, and support staff in their use of mediations to de-escalate situations before youth become disruptive.

IYC-Pere Marquette is a facility where youth are transferred based on good behavior at their originating institutions. As a result, the population of IYC-Pere Marquette does not accurately represent the youth population in IDJJ as a whole, and the youth housed there are notably better behaved and well suited to a less secure facility whose priority is in providing rehabilitation through off-site, community-based programs prior to release. Pere Marquette’s foci on robust programming, constructive youth-staff interactions, and reinforcing positive youth behavior serve as excellent examples for other youth facilities which struggle to provide a truly rehabilitative environment for their youth. It also exemplifies the proven benefits of housing youth in small, well-staffed facilities which allow for more customized, individualized treatment and for youth to develop trusting, therapeutic, one-on-one relationships with staff that are critical to rehabilitation.¹
The Facility

A. Population of Youth and Staff

IYC-Pere Marquette has capacity to house 40 youth between the ages of 13 to 20 years. At the time of JHA’s 2018 visit, the facility held 33 youth, which is a 17.5% decrease in population from JHA’s 2016 visit at which time the facility was at capacity with 40 youth. Because IYC-Pere Marquette is the only open, unfenced juvenile facility in Illinois, special consideration must be placed on the youth who are housed in this facility. Pere Marquette does not have a Reception and Classification (“R&C”) area, therefore all incoming youth are transferred from other facilities. Youth are primarily transferred from the larger neighboring facility IYC-Harrisburg, and engage in a screening process prior to being transferred to Pere Marquette. Youth must be evaluated as being a “low escape risk,” which involves an assessment of the transferring youth’s previous escape attempts from law enforcement, locked facilities, as well as other housing placements. Additionally, the facility considers the youth’s behavior from the transferring facility when making the decision to transfer the youth to IYC-Pere Marquette. A discussion occurs between administrators of the transferring and receiving facility, as well as with IDJJ administrators, to determine whether a youth should be transferred.

At the time of the visit, there were 92 staff (including state and contract positions) at Pere Marquette. There are four staff vacancies in the facility. Of the 92 staff, 68 (74%) were identified as White/Caucasian, 23 (25%) as Black/African American, and 1 (1%) as Unknown/Other. There are 50 security staff, who work across shifts, as is typical across IDJJ facilities. For the day (6am – 2pm) and evening (2pm – 10pm) shifts, the security staff to youth ratio is 1:6.67 at Pere Marquette. The second shift’s (8am – 4pm) staff to youth ratio is 1:5 youth. For the night shift (10pm – 6am), the ratio is 1:10. The Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) states that ideally, during waking hours the staff to youth ratio should be 1:6, and they recommend that during sleeping hours the ratio should
Out of all the 5 IDJJ facilities monitored in 2018, IYC-Pere Marquette has the lowest youth-to-staff ratios.

B. Physical Plant

IYC-Pere Marquette is the lowest level security facility in IDJJ (Level 3). It is located in rural Illinois, about five hours south of Chicago, across from the Mississippi River. The facility consists of five principal buildings that house administrative offices, school, recreation rooms, youth and family specialists’ offices, youth housing units, laundry, a weight room, and dietary.

The staff at IYC-Pere Marquette do an excellent job of providing services in a facility with limited space, however, it was apparent during our tour of the facility that more office space is needed. We noted that though there was a set of classrooms housed under a larger building, the special education classroom was housed in a separate and smaller building. Additionally, the teaching staff did not have individual offices to meet with students individually, prepare course material, grade student work, among other tasks. The special education teaching staff did not report any difficulties in conducting their work, however, JHA believes it would be of benefit to students to have all education services provided in one general area of the facility in order to reduce any potential stigmatization of special education students which can result when special education classrooms are physically separated from a main school facility and daily flow of school activities.iii This is a result of the separate modular space which was used to house special education being condemned, prompting the program to be moved to a separate building. As a result, there has been a shortage of space for teachers in the facilityiv.

To remedy the situation of limited space, the administration at IYC-Pere Marquette have identified areas in the facility for further expansion. First, they noted that the space above dietary, which is currently used as storage, can be transformed into a space for offices, but this idea is still in development. In addition, the administration noted that they have need for a multipurpose room to house facility-wide events.

Additionally, the administration reported that the facility’s gym is now being used as a general recreation center for youth, which includes a television with video game consoles, pool tables, and seating. The youth appeared to be using the space as intended, during our visit several youth were watching a movie while others were playing pool. Though there is an outside space for youth to play basketball, during the winter months or during inclement weather, youth do not have a space for physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that children and adolescents between the ages of 6 to 17 years of age do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate-to-rigorous physical activity every dayv. Pere Marquette needs a gymnasium or other separate physical space available for youth to engage in daily physical activity.

During the months following the visit, JHA received complaints that the air conditioning unit was not functioning during the late summer/early fall. When JHA asked administrators about this issue,
we were informed the issue had been resolved. We look forward to seeing a fully-functioning air conditioning system on our next visit.

Because of the proximity of IYC-Pere Marquette to the Mississippi River, flooding has occasionally forced staff and youth to temporarily relocate to the Alton Mental Health Center, this has happened a few times in the last couple of years. Demonstrating a strong connection between the facility and the surrounding community, citizens and local organizations have rallied together to support IYC-Pere Marquette by donating supplies. Administrators note that the majority of flooding experienced at the facility has occurred within the past 8 years, and has increased over this time period.

Mental Health Treatment And Rehabilitative Programming

A. Scope of Mental Health Treatment

IDJJ developed and implemented a mental health level (MHL) system whereby within one week of admission to a parent facility, a youth is placed in a mental health level which dictates the amount and frequency of mental health services. The levels are on a hierarchy with “0” indicating no mental health needs to “4” requiring inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. Because there are no existing empirically-supported mental health placement hierarchies, IDJJ has created their own system to place youth into levels of care. The definitions and requirements used in the MHL system are consistent across all IYCs.

Of the youth in the facility on the day of JHA’s visit, 20% (8) youth were in level 0 which indicates no mental health needs, 57.5% (23) youth, were described as having Minimal need (level 1), which according to IDJJ definitions indicates that the youth are presenting with mild signs or symptoms of a DSM-5 diagnosis. The DSM, or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, now in its fifth edition, is the text used by mental health providers to diagnose clients by providing criteria for a diagnosis. Seven and a half percent, or three youth, were labeled as having Moderate need (level 2), which according to IDJJ definitions indicates that the youth were presenting with moderate
signs or symptoms from the DSM-5. There were no youth in the higher mental health levels, including Urgent (level 3), Critical (level 3.5), or Hospitalized (level 4).

According to IDJJ policy, the youth’s level dictates the amount of services required per month. Youth in the Minimal need category require at least 90 minutes of mental health services a month, which may include group and/or family therapy. Youth labeled as having Moderate need require weekly mental health services (lasting 45 minutes in length) which may include family therapy sessions. Taken altogether, 65% of youth incarcerated in Pere Marquette are at or above the minimal need of mental health services.

Being a smaller facility, with a higher staff to youth ratio, Pere Marquette seems better equipped to manage a population with more urgent mental health needs than at a larger facility. Pere Marquette has three licensed mental health professionals on staff, each of whom has an average caseload of 11 youth. A typical mental health professional working in a private practice setting has an average caseload ranging from 25 to 40 clients per week. With a smaller caseload, staff are able to have more interactions with youth who may need and benefit from more treatment than is dictated by their mental health level.

Mental health staff also interact with youth through the many psychotherapeutic groups that are held in the facility. In total, nine groups are held throughout the year at IYC-Pere Marquette. One group uses a 16-session manual-based curriculum called SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Responding to Chronic Stress) to help youth manage and overcome histories of trauma. Other groups focus on issues relating to grief, successful management of symptoms, addressing errors in thinking (cognitive distortions), understanding diversity, masculinity, anger management, and using art therapy to process emotions and symptoms. Another group is co-facilitated with Aftercare (the juvenile version of parole), which entails helping youth make better decisions upon release.

Twenty of the twenty-six youth receiving mental health services (77%) are prescribed psychotropic medications. The most common medications prescribed in the facility are Adderall (for the treatment of Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD]), Clonidine (for the treatment of mood disorders), and Prozac (used in the treatment of mood and anxiety disorders). At IYC-Pere Marquette, youth who are stabilized on their medications see their psychiatrist once every 60-90 days, and those youth who are not yet stabilized are seen every 30 days. When the youth’s medications are being reviewed, to assess if they should change the dose or change medications...
entirely, family members are involved to express their concerns about the youth’s current symptoms and how they are reacting to the medication. JHA appreciates the involvement of a youth’s parents when making decisions about psychotropic medications, this is important input from a close source to the youth and it parents may also be responsible or involved in ongoing care of youth following release, including continuing and dispensing the youth’s medication.

B. Programming

According to IYC-Pere Marquette administrators, they make a concerted effort to engage youth in a variety of programming both inside and outside the facility. Within the facility, the Activities Committee selects a theme for each month, and works with the Youth Committee to determine activities for the month that relate to the theme. For example, during the month of JHA’s visit, the facility’s theme was “peace month.” During Peace Month, youth engaged in “peace walks,” which involved youth from both housing units walking together around the facility. Additionally, on the day prior to JHA’s visit, youth made tie-dyed shirts to wear for the rest of the month. JHA staff observed several youth wearing these shirts during our visit, demonstrating their enthusiasm and buy-in to the theme and activity.

In addition to the Youth Committee, the youth also have opportunities to provide input into programming and other aspects of the facility through their participation in the Youth Council. The Youth Council has a president, a vice president, and a secretary, and they run weekly meetings which involve all youth and staff. During these meetings, youth are praised for their achievements and positive behavior, such as congratulating a youth for raising his behavioral level. Additionally, during these meetings youth can air grievances they have in front of staff, with the goal of fostering dialogues to resolve potential conflicts. The Youth Council is also a space where youth can generate and implement ideas on how to successfully resolve a conflict between youth. JHA appreciates the opportunity for youth to learn and implement skills such as conflict resolution, diplomacy, leadership, and communication through the Youth Council.

The facility also runs a music therapy program called “Heartbeats.” This program is funded by IDJJ, and allows youth to use music as a creative outlet to heal past trauma. Heartbeats has been so well-received by youth that they are considering expanding the program to include a radio broadcasting component.

Youth also have many programming opportunities outside of the facility. The availability of these opportunities depends on the youth’s behavioral level, with many of the most desirable activities only offered to youth on the highest or “honors” behavior level. There are field trips available to youth on other behavioral levels, with the exception of youth on “C” grade, the lowest behavioral
level. During these outside programming opportunities, youth are dressed in civilian clothing, are not shackled or restrained, and are accompanied by security and programming staff.

Because of the lack of a formal gymnasium space, IYC-Pere Marquette has formed a partnership with neighboring Principia College to allow youth to use their gym. At Principia college the youth can play basketball and participate in a soccer league. Outside of sporting events, IYC-Pere Marquette makes an effort once a month to take the youth out into the community to watch a movie and eat dinner. Interested youth can also attend church services weekly at a local church. Youth also can participate in community service opportunities in which the institution is involved, including an adopt the highway program, helping out at a local food pantry, and helping the park district clean and set up picnic sites. Other field trips that bring youth into the surrounding community were mentioned to JHA staff during our visit and it was reported that staff provide funds for some of these excursions. It was reported that some field trips have included going to local museums (such as the Holocaust Museum in St. Louis), local attractions (such as “Cahokia Mounds” and Pere Marquette State Park), and Cardinals baseball games (in neighboring St. Louis).

JHA appreciates the diversity in opportunities available for youth to participate in activities both inside and outside the facility. Through extensive program offerings, youth’s idle time in their cells is minimized, leading to fewer behavioral disruptions in the facility. The clear benefit to the youths’ growth and development through participation in these activities begs the question, why youth in Illinois do not have similar community-based programming in their home communities available to them? These youth do not present a threat to public safety and are trusted not to escape IDJJ custody while on outside excursions in the community, it follows that this low-risk population is well-suited to receiving treatment and programming in their communities, near their families rather than at a remote IDJJ facility. For youth that have more significant needs for which a residential facility may still be required to deliver rehabilitative treatment and programming, Pere Marquette is evidence that this can be done more humanely and productively in smaller settings where individualized attention is available.
C. Family Involvement

The administration at Pere Marquette understands the importance of family interactions in the rehabilitation and treatment of their youth. Because of the relatively isolated location in southern Illinois, visiting at the facility can be a challenge, even though most of the youth at Pere Marquette originate from southern Illinois.

Once a month, the facility hosts “Family Day,” where the family members can meet with teachers and staff to learn about their child’s behavior, their academic progress, and families can share a meal with their child. Outside of Family Days, family members can also visit “any time” according to IYC-Pere Marquette administration. Families can visit on graduation days and pictures are taken of the graduate with their family. Youth who are themselves parents are permitted to have their children visit them in the facility, which is critical to instilling a bond between the father and child and helping the young men become responsible, caring parents.

Youth can also make phone calls to their families using the phone system present in all IDJJ facilities as often as they would like, but the youth must pay for each call at the rate of less than 1 cent per minute. For youth whose families do not have enough funds to put into the youth’s account for phone calls, the facility offers youth 4 free phone calls per month. Youth are also provided free calls if the youth is engaging in family therapy, they are provided free phone calls during meetings with their Youth and Family Specialist (YFS) counselor, and two free calls a month through their substance abuse counselor (while the youth is enrolled in Substance Abuse programming at the facility).

JHA applauds the steps taken by IYC-Pere Marquette administrators to maximize family contact by not only creating specialized events for families to attend, but also in circumventing some financial barriers for youth to make phone calls to connect to loved ones who cannot physically travel to the facility. Prevailing best practice standards dictate that contact between youth and families should be maximized to the greatest extent possible, given the evidence that incarcerated youth who have contact with their families have better outcomes upon release. We are pleased that IYC-Pere Marquette prioritizes family contact for its youth.
Behavioral Management Reforms:  
Level System and PBIS

The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, implemented in all IDJJ facilities in 2014, is the system used to manage youth behavior throughout IDJJ. According to IDJJ documentation on PBIS, each day is segmented into fourteen periods, and youth earn points throughout the day for good behavior. At the end of each of the fourteen hourly periods, staff are to notify the youth of the amount of points earned and the justifications for them. Youth may earn up to two points in each of these periods. During these discussions with staff and youth, it is intended that the staff focus on youth’s positive behavior. The amount of points earned throughout the week determines a youth’s behavioral level, which correlates with differing levels of privileges.

Youth enter the facility at the lowest of four behavioral levels, and through their stay can move up to Honors level, the highest level, which corresponds with the most privileges. A youth’s points earned during the week determine their level for the subsequent week. Earned points also dictate how many commissary items youth can purchase at the facility, and can also be redeemed at the PBIS store. IYC-Pere Marquette administration graciously provided JHA with a detailed list of the privileges associated with each level, and this is provided below as a table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time youth must be in their cells at night</th>
<th>Recreation</th>
<th>Off Grounds Trips</th>
<th>Commissary</th>
<th>Additional (for Honors level Only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honor Level</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00pm</td>
<td>9:00pm</td>
<td>8:30pm</td>
<td>8:00pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation in dorm and yard. Special recreation on Saturday afternoons. Can watch a movie on Friday and Saturday nights. Access to weight room on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday nights. Can go off grounds to watch a movie (youth pays) One meal off grounds (facility pays up to $8)</td>
<td>Recreation in dorm and yard. Can watch a movie on Friday and Saturday nights. Access to weight room on Tuesday and Thursday nights.</td>
<td>Facility-wide events. To obtain identification. For off-ground education. For off ground community service. For off ground recreational trips</td>
<td>Maximum amount $100 + footwear + electronics (or amount in Trust Fund). Limitations on items based on level.</td>
<td>Additional privileges for honors level youth include: 1 weekly phone call, Youth can purchase a pair of jeans and wear them on Friday, 2 Forest Green Polo, 1 Radio, 1 Comforter, Youth may request another Honor level youth as a roommate, or they may request placement in a single room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation in dorm and yard. Can watch a movie on Friday and Saturday nights. Access to weight room. Can go off grounds to watch a movie (youth pays)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Facility-wide events. To obtain identification. For off-ground education. For off ground community service.</td>
<td>Maximum amount $75 + footwear + electronics (or amount in Trust Fund). Limitations on items based on level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation in dorm and yard. Can watch a movie on Friday nights. Access to weight room during scheduled recreation.</td>
<td>Facility-wide events. To obtain identification. For off-ground education. For off ground community service.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum amount $50 + footwear + electronics (or amount in Trust Fund). Limitations on items based on level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation in dorm and yard. Access to weight room during inclement weather.</td>
<td>Facility-wide events. To obtain identification. For off-ground education.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum amount $25 + footwear (or amount in Trust Fund). Limitations on items based on level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Youth can have a soda and snack with movie on Saturday.
JHA is impressed by the breadth and scope of privileges offered to youth at IYC-Pere Marquette. As evidenced in the table, these tangible incentives across all levels can motivate youth to engage in positive behavior.

Administrators state that PBIS’ implementation “is going great.” Pere Marquette was utilizing a similar rewards-based system prior to IDJJ’s implementation of a uniform PBIS system agency-wide at all youth facilities. Once the agency-wide PBIS adoption occurred, Pere Marquette administrators noted that it took some time to adapt at their facility’s system into the uniform IDJJ PBIS system but it is now going well. With the IDJJ facility-wide application of PBIS, IYC-Pere Marquette is now using “peer bucks,” a token of recognition provided by staff to youth when the youth does something positive, which can be redeemed through raffles held at the facility. Additionally, youth at IYC-Pere Marquette who do not have any disciplinary infractions, or “tickets” for a month are treated to a special breakfast. On a quarterly basis, youth who do not receive any tickets or who have not engaged in any fighting, assaults, or intimidation can dress formally and participate in a “special leadership meal,” held outside the facility. JHA applauds IYC-Pere Marquette in providing ample positive rewards to reinforce good behavior in the institution. By having multiple types of incentives, youth who may not be motivated by one incentive may be motivated by another, which enhances the overall effectiveness of PBIS as a behavioral management system.

Though PBIS has been an effective strategy in a variety of settings in the management of youth behavior, the system does have its limitations. The primary limitation of PBIS is that it does not provide guidance on how to manage youth who are actively disruptive or aggressive. To respond to this need, IYC-Pere Marquette has engaged in several strategies to both prevent youth misbehavior, but also to quickly diffuse volatile situations before they escalate. The first strategy entails the use of a “timeout room” in the facility. This room is a re-purposed cell located in what used to be the security unit for youth receiving disciplinary conferment. Youth may choose to go into the room voluntarily, or may be required to go there to “cool down” after an aggressive episode. It was reported that the room is utilized approximately 4-5 times a day, for up to an hour during each use. JHA appreciates Pere Marquette’s creativity in providing alternative venues for youth to de-escalate and get away from situations causing extreme duress. JHA recommends that the facility consider creating an atmosphere that encourages calm inside these “rooms” because they are rather sparse cells that used to be used to house aggressive youths for lengthy periods of confinement. Research has shown that certain colors, music and other calming tools can promote de-escalation, self control and increase feelings of calm. In Washington Corrections Center, located in Shelton Washington, a “Blue Room” was developed, where inmates are provided the opportunity to spend their recreation hour.
watching nature videos in a soothing environment. In a comparison of records, those inmates who were allowed time to de-escalate in the “Blue Room” received slightly less (though not statistically significant) disciplinary infractions compared to those who did not have access.

In addition to a “timeout room,” IYC-Pere Marquette administration notes that their focus on relationship-building and communication with youth is an effective deterrent to youth misbehavior in the facility. Because the facility does not use any physical restraints or chemical agents to manage disruptive behavior, they must utilize de-escalation techniques and early interventions to address a situation before it turns overly disruptive or violent. During our tour of the facility, we noted several instances of positive youth and staff interaction, including staff joking and laughing with youth as the youth played basketball. The staff and youth appeared to have a genuine connection and care for each other. One youth, when comparing his treatment at IYC-Pere Marquette compared to another IDJJ facility, stated “we get 100% respect down here” from staff. JHA does not take this statement lightly, for a youth or an adult to feel respected by the staff they work with and who have control over much of their existence is both rare and remarkable.

“we get 100% respect down here”
– IYC-Pere Marquette Youth

Education

Administrators report that in the 2017-2018 school year (July 1st, 2017 to June 30th, 2018), 13 youth at IYC-Pere Marquette passed their GED exam (General Education Development - a High School Equivalency Diploma program), 25 youth received high school diplomas, and 8 youth earned their 8th grade diploma. The school is fully staffed and while the facility would benefit from more space for classrooms and offices, the school is functioning properly with five 50-60-minute class periods per day and 5 days of operation.

As with all IDJJ facilities, IYC-Pere Marquette uses a blended learning model for instruction, which entails online-based instruction coupled with teaching staff who provide academic support. IDJJ currently uses the Pearson Connexus online learning program, which is an accredited program for students to earn transferrable credits. Under this program, credits earned by youth in the facility go towards earning their high school diploma from schools in any Illinois public school district, including school district 428 which serves all of the IDJJ facilities. Because this program is primarily online-based, the instruction is tailored to the individual’s academic progress within each subject area. As a result, IYC-Pere Marquette teachers may have a classroom of students in a subject area where the individual students may be working at entirely different grade levels. As the teachers assist the students, they must tailor their support to these various grade levels which requires dexterity and creativity by the teachers. Pere Marquette has 3 special education teachers and 4 general education teachers. School administration reported that ideally they would like more specific subject matter teachers. One teacher is certified specifically as a math teacher, who moves between classrooms to assist youth. The attention paid to ensuring a quality education is evidenced
by youth’s perceptions of the school, which was exemplified by one youth whole told us that, “I like the school. The teachers are cool.”

A recent addition to the vocational options available to IYC-Pere Marquette youth is a job preparedness program that has been started within the institution. Pere Marquette piloted the program this year with approximately 7-8 youth, culminating in the youth preparing resumes. They are currently seeking more programs for youth who have graduated high school to engage in that will provide job skills. Youth can receive additional vocational training through a collaboration with Lewis and Clark community college that allow youth to attend classes there. Two youth are currently enrolled in automotive repair classes, three youth are involved in construction classes, and five youth are attending classes in general education. Also, since it’s inception in December 2014, thirty-seven youth have completed the Youthbuild program at Lewis and Clark Community College, which is an international program that teaches youth construction skills by building affordable housing and other community assets such as community centers and schools. JHA applauds IYC-Pere Marquette in providing youth with a consistent and quality education, but also with vocational training which may increase employment success upon release.

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4 During a review of a draft of the report with the superintendent of the facility, JHA was informed that since our visit, individual offices have been made available for each of the teachers. We look forward to confirming this change in our next visit.


6 https://psychcentral.com/blog/6-signs-its-time-to-dump-your-therapist/


Learn more at: https://www.pearson.com/us/prek-12/products-services-teaching/online-blended-learning-solutions/pearson-connexus.html

During a review of the draft of the report in April 2019, JHA was informed that an additional youth is taking a mathematics class at Lewis and Clark University.

Learn more at https://www.youthbuild.org/