Goal 1: To hire a GED Coordinator at the district level who will serve as a liaison between DYS youth and Adult Education Center personnel.

Many DYS youth decide (for a variety of reasons) that the best educational pursuit for them is to earn a GED. With youth constantly coming and going to each facility, there is a great need for structure and leadership; therefore, DYS is hiring a full-time GED Coordinator. Some of the tasks this person will be assigned are as follows:

- Identify students who are suitable candidates for the GED Program. (Use the TTM schedule as the source of student names.)
- Schedule students to take TABE assessments.
- Identify which skills were missed on a particular GED exam and help students know what to study and how to study to make a higher score the next time.
- Assist with transportation arrangements when it becomes necessary to test off campus.
- Manage the Naviance Program and use it to guide students while completing their Student Success Plans.
- Establish procedures and protocols that align with both the ADE and Adult Education guidelines.

Goal 2: To learn about yoga, provide youth with a safe place to “decompress,” purchase materials and resources needed to create a yoga studio, and start a new program that will support students’ emotional, physical, and social skills. It is our hope that students would adopt some of the skills and strategies they learn in the yoga studio and apply them as coping mechanisms when becoming stressed, depressed, angry, frustrated, etc.

Goal 3: (Continued, On-going) To help students become better readers through our critical reading class which was designed for all students who have demonstrated characteristics of dyslexia.

Background

Between 80-90% of students remanded to the custody of DYS struggle to read and are several grade levels behind where they should be in terms of their academic performance. We currently use the Woodcock Johnson-IV and/or the WRAT5 as screeners then administer the CTOPP to determine which students need further testing and interventions that will improve both their reading and comprehension.

All groups of students benefit from these efforts, including ESL, Special Education, 504, males, females, low socio-economic, highly mobile, Specific Learning Disability, etc. We strive to provide all DYS students with equal opportunities to strengthen their reading skills, recognize
words, and comprehend the meanings of what they have read. We know if our students can do these things, the chances of them experiencing success in many aspects of their lives will increase greatly.

The Arkansas Division of Youth Services will continue to help struggling readers. We have provided teachers with dyslexia training and purchased small group kits. We will continue to expand training to include more teachers and will purchase more intervention kits for classrooms.

Resources have been purchased from Winsor Learning, which primarily includes intervention kits for teachers, as well as supplies and materials for students.

Veteran teachers have completed the Science of Reading training; however, there are very few veteran/trained teachers. DYS facilities are under the management of "Rite of Passage" and ROP continues to experience a shortage of qualified staff. ROP administrators are working diligently to recruit and retain new staff members. Newly hired teachers will need to start the training after being hired by ROP.

All students are assessed when they first arrive at AJATC intake. Progress monitoring takes place every 90 days. The average length of stay is six months. Pre and post tests are given to determine the growth students make while they are with us. The two assessments we depend on most for pre-and post-results are Edmentum Exact Path Diagnostics and the Winsor Learning Reading Placement assessments in reading and spelling. The Woodcock Johnson IV, the WRAT5, and the CTOPP are used to identify youth who might benefit by being placed in a critical reading class. Monitoring is done by DYS central office administrators on staff in the education department.

The DYS student population differs from a regular school. Students typically stay 6-9 months, some shorter, and some longer. We have found that the best system is to evaluate each student and determine the growth during the time they are with us. In terms of this district support plan, we will be evaluating reading progress and growth. We can look at the percentage of students (collectively) who showed positive gains while they were with us.