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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Welcome

RESEARCH

- 5 Prison to School to Redemption | By Kristen Antoine-Morse
- 14 Incarcerated Adults with Low Skills: Findings from the 2014 PIAAC Prison Study |
By Margaret Patterson, Ph.D.
- 25 Less Rigor, More Vigor; the Rigor Will Come Through the Adaptive Process | By Darrell Bingham,
Jeffery D. Hendricks, & Mark VanVoorhis
- 29 Employer Reservation and Ex-Offender Employment Opportunities | By Darrell Miller, D.B.A.

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE

- 47 J.U.M.P. Jail Understanding Mathematics Project | By David R. Finston & Julia Ruiz
- 54 Pathway to Success: Creating Individualized Career Pathways for Inmates and Reentrants |
By KayLynn Hamilton, Kelly Martini, Terri Fazio, & Dorenda Hamarlund
- 59 Training Parishioners to Minister More Effectively to Ex-Offenders | By Rosie Spann-Johnson
- 65 The Importance of Fiction and Storytelling in a Prison Classroom | By Diane Ketelle
- 69 Creating Opportunity in Prison Education: Interns & Tutors | By Lauren L. Zavrel, Ed.M.
- 79 The Minnesota Standard Adult Diploma: Hope and Opportunity for Inmates | By Brad Hasskamp,
Adam Kuehnel, Theresa Luther-Dolan, Nancy Rosman, & George Kimball
- 90 Release Package—A Tool To Reduce Recidivism? | By Marit Runyon
- 94 Professional Learning Communities in Prisons | By Sudie Whalen, Shannon Swain,
Mariann Fedele-McLeod, & Marian Thacher
- 99 MicroNovels: An Elegantly Simple Approach to Strengthening Literacy | By Adam Kuehnel

REFLECTION

- 112 Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset in Correctional Adult Education Setting | By Michelle Candy
- 115 Educators Behind Bars | By Robert Fewins
- 118 A Right to Learn: Earning a Degree with a Criminal Conviction | By Anna Giannicchi
- 122 Why Aren't We Spending More on Prisoner Education? | By Stephen Steurer

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PRISON LITERACY

WELCOME

In 1978, Dr. Jack Mezirow of Teacher’s College at Columbia University introduced the world to the theory of Transformative Learning. This adult-focused learning theory builds upon the basic premise that from the earliest ages, individuals’ perspectives of the world are shaped by their environments and experiences. Their curiosities are nurtured by learning events, both formal and informal, which work to form their views of themselves and the world around them. Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory has been the topic of much discussion among scholars and has seen varied applications and refinements through the years. Despite the evolving discussion, a consistent theme that has remained is that adult learners are often prompted to change because of challenges to their perspectives, beliefs, or views of the world. Mezirow labeled this perspective change a “disorienting dilemma.” The dilemma might take the form of a sudden change in the individual’s economic, relationship, or health status or might be the result of life situations fueled by conscious and unconscious decisions. While the intensity level of the dilemma may vary, it typically leads individuals to question their assumptions and reflect on their situation to bring meaning and context to their new reality. Unfortunately, in some instances, the disorienting dilemma is rooted in associations and choices leading to serving time in the criminal justice system.

This Prison Literacy edition of The COABE Journal highlights programs, approaches, and professionals who work with adults currently serving or who have served time in correctional settings. These contributions are intended to generate ideas for effectively providing quality and relevant learning opportunities to those who are “behind the walls” and help them improve their experiences once they transition to life “outside the walls.”

The pieces featured in this themed edition constructively contribute to the discussion as COABE continues its mission: to inspire educators so adults succeed and communities thrive. It is my hope that as you read these contributions, you will experience a transformation in your views of the incarcerated and the programs, practices, and policies that effectively serve these adult learners.

I wish you all the best in your learning journey!

Don Finn, Ph.D.

COABE President-Elect (2017-2019)

Publications Committee Chairman



SPECIAL EDITION PRISON LITERACY

WELCOME

Never in a million years would I have thought that I would be writing this welcome to the COABE family of educators, administrators, correctional officers, and returning citizens who have come to recognize the importance of education in the reintegration process of those men and women traveling through our criminal justice system. It was a little over three years ago that I exited a Federal penitentiary after a five-year sentence for some horrible life choices. From the second I entered the prison system I knew that my skills as a successful trial lawyer, along with a passion for teaching and helping others, were about to set me on a pathway to touch the lives of many and help people navigate their successful return home from incarceration.

After teaching over fifty classes behind the walls, I exited our prison system to a life of teaching adult math, reading, and the art of survival after incarceration. While still living in a halfway home, I began to realize that education and skill development needed to be at the top of the priority list, right up there with housing, basic needs, and employment. Quickly becoming a director of workforce development for an adult literacy agency, working with some of the most impoverished and challenged students, I experienced first-hand many of the 40,000 challenges and barriers that directly impact returning citizens.

As the current Executive Director of Reentry Services for JEVS Human Services, and active at the county, state, and federal level of the criminal justice reform movement, I believe that prison reform cannot occur without addressing the need to educate and prepare those behind the walls for their inevitable release home. With over 70 million people in the United States trying to navigate a criminal past, education and skill development lead the way to a career path and hold the key to the revolving prison cell doors.

It is now with great pride, humility and gratitude that I welcome the members of the COABE Literacy Behind & Beyond the Walls Committee and the entire COABE family in beginning the journey to recognize, repair, and revitalize the prison educational system both behind and beyond the walls.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey Abramowitz
Literacy Behind & Beyond The Walls Committee Chair

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WELCOME

It was my great pleasure to act as managing editor to this edition of the COABE Journal. In practice, that meant I had the privilege of being in conversation with many talented educators from across the country, providing feedback as they scoped ideas and drafted articles.

Of the many contexts in which adult education occurs, correctional education settings are certainly among the most challenging. Correctional educators willingly put themselves behind locked doors to do their work. They navigate educational and correctional bureaucracies. They educate and motivate and heal students who find themselves at perhaps their lowest point in life.

Correctional educators' passion was evident in the response to this edition's call for articles. A record 44 submissions came in and the Journal Advisory Committee had to make hard choices to select only these articles to publish. They represent a diversity of perspectives in prison literacy, and we hope you will find practical ideas and inspirational ideals among them. I certainly did.

Sincerely,
Judy Mortrude
Managing Editor
The Resource for Adult Education

SPECIAL EDITION
PRISON LITERACY

RESEARCH

PRISON TO SCHOOL TO REDEMPTION

Kristen Antoine-Morse

B.E.L.O.V.E.D. Community: Bridge to Enhance the Lives of Offenders
and Victims through Education and Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

Data from the Louisiana Department of Corrections indicates that there are approximately 49,000 prisoners in the United States (U.S.) serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. Of that number, 4,885, or 10% of these inmates, are located in Louisiana (The Sentencing Project, 2016). Louisiana currently has the highest prison population in the world relative to the overall prison population; 13.6% of these individuals are serving a life sentence. Louisiana is also one of a handful of states that only mandates life without the possibility of parole as their mandatory life sentence (The Sentencing Project, 2016).

Research suggests that having faith-based programs and institutions within a prison environment has a notable effect on the reduction of prison violence and disciplinary actions. In the case of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, LA, there was a 74% reduction in prison violence after the establishment of the Leavell College New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) in 1995 (Sharkey, 2016). Participants in the Bachelor of Arts undergraduate program receive a degree in Christian Ministry which they are able to use to develop and facilitate faith-based discipleship training courses and assist chaplains with various worship and religious obligations. The program increases participant education levels by providing them with a college degree, and prepares them for various employment opportunities if they are released from the prison (Sharkey, 2016).

This article summarizes the results and conclusions of a study I conducted in 2017 in which I examined the lived experiences of four men incarcerated at the Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola) near St. Francisville, Louisiana, (referred to in this article as LSP or Angola) and one returning citizen who was previously incarcerated. In the study, I take into account the redemptive process and how these men found a way to attempt to create a better future for themselves through postsecondary correctional education in a faith-based system despite the slim chances that they would be allowed to re-enter society. The following sections summarize my research design, highlight the results and conclusions of my research, propose applications for further implementation and examine implications for the school-to-prison pipeline (SPP).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The five participants in this study consisted of four currently incarcerated men who have served 15+ years at LSP (two pastors, one teacher, and one new graduate) and one returning citizen who served 20+ years at LSP. All of these men have completed a BA in Christian Ministry at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary while incarcerated. All five of these participants provided a wealth of knowledge about the prison culture as well as the effects of the Bible school on the individual inmates. The four currently incarcerated men and the returning citizen were able to provide the researcher with pertinent knowledge specific to prison life at Angola and their educational journey that would not otherwise be attainable. They were also able to point out key factors in their lives that may have led them through the school-to-prison pipeline and may have a bearing on their reasons for seeking education as incarcerated men. These five case study participants were able to give the researcher and the readers a glimpse into the cultural and educational shifts that have happened within LSP.

Setting

Having its own zip code, the Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP) is located in Angola, Louisiana near the town of St. Francisville, La, in West Feliciana Parish. "It is the only fully maximum security institution in the state, housing over 6,300 adult males, over 85% of which are violent offenders" (Prison Pro, 2016). Approximately 4,000 inmates in this prison are serving life sentences, and the facility houses the state's male death row inmates. Once known as the bloodiest prison in America, LSP has made a drastic shift to become a more peaceful and spiritual place. Within the walls of the main prison, the Leavell College NOBTS was constructed. "The specific purpose of the NOBTS Extension Center at LSP is to prepare offender leaders to evangelize their peers within all areas of the prison, and other institutions of the Louisiana Department of Corrections" (Sharkey, 2016). Along with the Bible College, Angola has a host of programs available to their incarcerated population. "LSP has educational and vocational programs that allow inmates to earn a GED and adult basic education and teach carpentry, welding, horticulture, culinary skills, automotive repair, H-VAC, electrical, and industrial painting" (Prison Pro, 2016).

The incarcerated individuals in this study live within the walls of the main prison in designated dormitory areas. The A-Building or visiting shed is where they get to spend time for a few hours every two weeks with their families and loved ones who come to see them. All of the face-to-face interactions with the participants occurred in this visiting shed on the weekends and at the spring Angola Prison Rodeo.

Data Sources

In order to collect my narratives for this case study, I used a blend of data collection methods. For this study, I gathered participant narrative response through hand written letters, field notes generated from face-to-face discussions and visit observations, responses to the Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI) Survey, review of selected artifacts, and a researcher's notebook. Triangulation occurred from utilizing different sources of data.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were categorized and organized by each of the question types (6) for each of the participants involved in the study. The narrative stories of the participants, including who they are, their early educational experiences, their prison life and college experiences, and finally their opinions and thoughts

on the school-to-prison pipeline (as laid out by the article they read and further discussion) were collected and organized according to the questionnaire responses in addition to their narratives. Analysis began with transcription of interviews, questionnaire responses, field notes, and my researcher's journal. I applied inductive open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to sentences and/or phrases from each of the data sources. Codes were consolidated and categorized and finally collapsed into code categories, and from categories, themes were extracted (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Trustworthiness was achieved through member checks (Patton, 2002), prolonged contact with participants, and knowledge of the workings of LSP. The member checks were performed by reading and rereading participant written responses; then having face-to-face interviews with participants in order to assure researcher assumptions about the narrative stories were correct. Participant data collected through the PASCI survey was also a third check, and a normalized way of assessing participant self-perception.

While carefully reading through the participant-written responses to the questionnaire, I sorted and grouped the responses by code (Roberts, 2010). Next, I compiled a list of common codes as they related to each of the survey questions and the participant answers. This allowed me to create a master coding list which was a combination of topic codes which became themes, patterns, and categories related to the individual research questions. Code instances were counted. I also made sure to illustrate the similarities and differences found within the responses, and identified the common threads of information while acknowledging the possible outlier information. NVivo Software was used to sort responses and create table data for participants (QSR International, 2017).

Data Breakdown

K-12 Education Issues that Contributed to Incarceration Creating the School-to-Prison Pipeline. There were a total of 29 instances in which K-12 issues that contributed to the participant incarceration were discussed. The participants repeatedly discussed instances where they dropped out of school, had a lack of interest in school, were more interested in street life than in school, and/or were only putting a minimum effort into school. In these instances, it was clear that there was no motivating factor that caused the men to want to continue with their education. There were various factors that enticed them into other ways of life and led them to see no value in the school environment. Had they had the guidance and motivation they needed to value education and desire a more solid future, they might have escaped the pipeline. Surprisingly, all of the participants considered themselves to be intelligent individuals academically, but, due to the circumstances around them, they opted to drop out of school, which ultimately led to their incarcerations.

Impact of Earning a Degree while Incarcerated on Self-Esteem. This study examined self-efficacy and how participants were affected by their attainment of a Bachelor's Degree while incarcerated. Within the data, there were 75 instances where the participants referred to the impact of their degree on their self-esteem. This was a significant finding. Viewing oneself as a person with purpose and drive as well as living a Christ-like existence were two ways that participants were affected. All of the participants saw themselves as people of worth and substance prior to entry into the Bible College; but the change occurred when they were able to funnel their sense of worth into a purpose-driven life that highlighted the word of God and helping others. Participants repeatedly referred to the impact of education on their already high confidence. Having the degree and being trained to be purposeful allowed them to teach and share the word of God with others. This helped them cope with their immediate environment and also boosted their confidence and purpose to the next level. The pre-existence of their self-worth and confidence is what led them to want to pursue a better education and life, even within the walls of the institution of their confinement. The Bible College

was not what redeemed the participants. They were redeemed before they entered. The Bible College was a mechanism to enhance what they already knew they had inside.

Background Issues that Contributed to Incarceration. When discussing their backgrounds, data revealed 44 instances where the participants discussed how their background issues could have possibly contributed to their incarceration. The absence or presence of a father figure surfaced prominently in the data. In two of the participants, the father figure was absent, which led to feelings of abandonment and perceived lack of a male role model. The other three participants did have a father figure present, but still did not receive the male guidance that would have shown them the value of a strong educational foundation. They also discussed their siblings and where they fell within their familial structure, which also could have also contributed to the limited time and attention they received from their parents.

Participants' ages at the time of incarceration and the length of time they served were also common data themes. All of the participants except for one were under the age of 20 when they were incarcerated and given a life sentence, and all but that one participant had served over 20 years of incarceration. It is important to reflect on how the participants' true maturity levels, despite legal adult status, could have possibly affected their decision-making at the time they committed their crimes. In the courts, you are legally considered an adult at the age of 18 years old, but when it comes to maturity in decision-making regarding alcohol consumption and marriage, the legal age is 21 years old. Mental Health Daily states, "Someone who is 18 may make riskier decisions than someone in their mid-20s in part due to lack of experience, but primarily due to an underdeveloped brain," and, "most experts suggest that the brain is fully developed by age 25" (Mental Health Daily, 2017, p. 1). If the age at which scientists believe the brain is fully capable of making important decisions is 25 years old, then that is the age at which both criminal and social standards should be set. One of the participants was only 16 years old when he was convicted; so his age and maturity should have played a pivotal role in his criminal case. These issues with maturity and decision-making could have also ultimately affected the participants' choices to drop out of school.

The other background factors that could have led to participant incarceration were discipline and the lack thereof. There was one participant who had structure and strict discipline as a small youth, but who lost that structure when his father moved away. All other participants reported that their parents were not authoritarian as it pertained to discipline within the home. It was easy for the participants to slip through the cracks when the environment they were in was not structured for success.

NOBTS Experience Led to Growth and Positive Reintegration into Society. This theme was relevant to the men as it pertains to their current lives. There were 71 code instances where the participants discussed their NOBTS Experience and how it was related to their personal growth, and, in the case of the returning citizen, how it related to his reintegration into society. The participants referenced their personal growth as it pertained to teaching and sharing the word of God. Four out of five participants made definite mention of how their Bible College experience helped them to better understand God and their religious beliefs. As stated previously, most of them felt as though they already possessed the skills necessary to be successful, but the NOBTS experience enhanced their purpose and confidence in what they were doing with their lives. Though they had made poor choices in the past, they were better equipped to make good choices as well as counsel others and assist them in making better choices as well.

The reintegration portion came mostly from the reflections of the returning citizen. He is currently on parole after serving 23 years of a 50-year sentence, and he gave his thoughts on the NOBTS program as well

as other programs within the prison that contributed to his success as a returning citizen. He believed that his job readiness came from a combination of the vocational skills acquired while incarcerated and his attainment of his bachelor's degree. He put more emphasis on the vocational training because he felt as though that prepared him for the kind of work that could be offered to a convicted felon. The bachelor's degree was seen as an added bonus that allowed him to be more articulate and could enhance his chances at getting a job. He reiterated several times that it would be difficult for a felon to get a job and also put an emphasis on the difficulty of coming out of prison and getting a job that was financially sustaining, especially for an aging offender. This participant's information was integral to this research, as he has seen both sides of the issue.

Mechanisms that Led to the Culture Shift Within the Prison. In a total of 53 instances, the participants discussed how the prison as a whole had changed culturally. Initially, they discussed the changes in the prison environment, and then they talked about the tools that were used to cause this change. All of the participants reported seeing a positive effect on the prison in 1995 when two things occurred: a new warden, Burl Cain, was instated and the NOBTS program was started. It was a commonality amongst the participants that they felt the culture change came from within the prison itself. Men were given an opportunity to be treated better and be trusted, and in turn were afforded privileges that were unheard of before. The combination of religious practices found in the offender-led church congregations and the knowledge and skills being offered to the men created new hope. It seems as if the men were ready for change, and they accepted the opportunity to create a cultural shift.

Participant Self-Evaluations of their Paths Through the School-to-Prison Pipeline. When the participants reported on their life experiences, data revealed there were 99 instances where they realized that they had experienced the school-to-prison pipeline. This particular theme had the highest results of all codes. The participants reported factors related to the pipeline similarly in the following impact categories: poverty, drop-out, street life, and K-12 environment. These are factors that the men in this study felt contributed to the life that led to their incarceration. All of them shared similar characteristics, but none of them had ever heard of the school-to-prison pipeline before they went to prison. Prior to participating in this study, they were unaware of how they had been affected by this socioeconomic pattern, and until they became a part of the system, they didn't understand how they fit in it. It wasn't until they had come to prison and reflected on their life choices that the participants made the decision to educate themselves on the disparities that led them to the path they had chosen. At the same time, they also made the choice to attempt to rectify the situation.

Data Summary. The men in this study gave clear statements about their thoughts and experiences related to the NOBTS's impact on their lives and on the prison, and they shared their personal feelings about their own self-efficacy. The returning citizen's testimony was especially important as he spent 23 years at LSP and has reintegrated into society. Thus far, he has proven to be successful and well-adjusted, with limited risk of recidivism.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Post-Secondary Correctional Education and Participant Self-Efficacy

The participants in the study were given an altered PASC Survey and their responses were categorized based on how high they scored in each of the eight categories. This survey was altered from the Fleming Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (Fleming & Whalen, 1990). The PASC model uses academic and non-academic categories, which have both been broken down further into more categories: self-regard, social

acceptance, academic ability, verbal ability, math ability, physical appearance, parental acceptance, and social anxiety. This gives a rounded view of self-concept, and has been considered a “brief but reliable and valid instrument” to measure the self-concepts of young adults (Woodland, 2008, p. 457).

When the results were tallied for each category for each of the participants, it was noted that they all had self-concept scores at or above the median scale of four. When asked about their self-concept before and after completing the NOBTS program, most of them said that they thought highly of themselves before entering the program. Many of the participants were already confident in most of the categories, but felt that their academic abilities either increased or were only utilized because of the NOBTS program. A case could be made that these students already possessed the skills and self-worth needed to be successful, and the NOBTS program simply provided them an opportunity to express that. A case can also be made that these participants became interested in the NOBTS program because they knew they could be successful and because they had the drive to improve their situation. The median scores for the men in this study indicate that the participants perceived themselves to have the academic and personal abilities needed to be successful in their post-secondary correctional education.

Participant NOBTS Experience at Angola

When conversing with all participants in the study, an overwhelming trend that surfaced was that the NOBTS experience was about finding God. They all felt as though their time in the Bible College gave them a greater understanding of the word of God and an avenue to share that word with others. As the Baylor study noted, there are five specific achievements of religious faith for long-term inmates:

- Creates a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal;
- Imbues the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning;
- Empowers the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God;
- Provides the prisoner with the language and framework for forgiveness;
- Allows a sense of control over an unknown future.

(Hallett, Hays, Johnson, Jang, & Duwe, 2016)

When discussing the seminary experience with the men, it was evident that they already had high expectations of themselves and regarded themselves as more than just inmates. It was noted by more than one of the participants that they found meaning and purpose throughout their seminary studies which helped to better direct them to improving their lives as incarcerated men, despite the gravity of the long-term mandatory sentences they had been handed years ago. Being part of the inmate-minister community has empowered all of the participants who are still incarcerated. They have been given roles as pastors, ministers, and teachers within LSP and, in some cases, at other correctional facilities throughout the state. They all spoke of being able to spread the word of God and have confidence in their abilities to help others. The participants in this study all noted that their morality was found before entering the seminary; therefore, their journey as it relates to forgiveness had more to do with their new ability to serve others through Christ. As men serving life sentences, it is evident that four of the participants are not in control of their futures, but their involvement with the Bible College and inmate minister program have afforded them the slight luxury of being able to have control over their Angola experience. Their faith in God has given them hope that they could possibly have a true future outside the walls of LSP, and they pass this feeling of hope on to others through their counseling, ministry, and teaching. Essentially, they have put their talents to use for the purpose of helping others within the bleak situation of decades of incarceration.

School-to-Prison Pipeline and Participant Experience

After reading through the article “Beyond School-to-Prison Pipeline and Toward an Educational and Penal Realism” (Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014), and discussing what the SPP is, each of the participants in the study noted that they felt they had been a victim of the SPP in their K-12 school experiences, and each one of them dropped out of school at some point during their high school tenure. Four out of the five participants were incarcerated prior to 1997, and were sentenced at the height of the “tough on crime” era of the 1990s.

None of the participants noted that they had any academic difficulties, and all of them considered themselves to have adequate intellectual abilities, even leading up to their leaving school. The participants compared their experiences to the following quotation about the School to Prison Pipeline:

Some research suggests that when African American males enter school their educational path is altered by situational variables. These situational variables include experiencing harsher discipline practices, being taught by unprepared teachers, being referred for special education, and a feeling of detachment from school. The combination of these factors within the education system have been purported to contribute to the overrepresentation of African American males in prison. This is referred to as the School to Prison Pipeline. (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010, p. 2)

Detachment from the school environment was evident for all five of the participants. They felt as if they did not need to be in school, and much of the time, their attention was focused elsewhere. Their preference was to involve themselves in the street life of their immediate environment. All participants reported that they felt disconnected from school, and they were uninterested in academic activities unless they played sports. The participants in my study found the streets to be more comforting and welcoming than the school atmosphere, and their success and acceptance could be found by navigating and manipulating the street life. This, in combination with other bad choices, led them down the pipeline to end up in prison.

CONCLUSION

As an educational leader/instructional specialist for K-12 education, I have witnessed many instances in which the SPP could have been addressed and possibly redirected. It is essential that preservice teachers are made aware of the ramifications of the choices they make in the classroom. They need to be educated about the SPP, and given the tools needed to properly address and teach students who may fall into the category of those most susceptible to the SPP. It is also important for teachers to recognize cultural differences among the students they teach and acknowledge the differences that they may have from their students while incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy. Being able to recognize the student-teacher gap is a first step in possibly redirecting the pipeline.

Based on this research, it is important for us to start thinking of our prison facilities as places to create change and promote opportunities for educational growth. There seems to be an extreme disconnect in the system, and we have regarded prisons as places merely for punishment and isolation instead of for rehabilitation and healing. Many incarcerated individuals can and will be reintegrated back into society, and they deserve a chance at a fresh start. Being saddled with the label of *felon* already contributes to the difficulty of reintegration, but providing them with meaningful education while incarcerated gives them a chance at being successful upon release.

The men in the NOBTS program have chosen education and religion despite the grim circumstances of their incarceration. This speaks to the character of the individual, as well as the potential for the individual to be positively reintegrated with a low chance of recidivism. If we believe that education is valuable and creates opportunity, then we must believe that this is applicable across the board. Using post-secondary correctional education to increase the stability of returning citizens, while preparing them for reintegration and the workplace is something that should be infused into the criminal justice system as a whole. Students who often slip through the cracks and resort to lives of criminal activity are not lost. They can still be educated and molded into adults who can one day be released back into society and be productive members with low risk of recidivism. The NOBTS at Angola is a model facility and can be used as a blueprint for education and redemption across the country. ✂

Kristen Antoine-Morse received her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University in August of 2017 where her research focused on postsecondary correctional education and the effects of the School to Prison Pipeline. Upon graduation she began to further her research and has started a non-profit organization tailored toward her research and community interest. B.E.L.O.V.E.D. Community: Bridge to Enhance the Lives of Offenders and Victims through Education and Dialogue is a grassroots organization that she would like to grow into a positive avenue to address penal reform, restorative justice, children affected by the penal system, and redirecting the school to prison pipeline.

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INCARCERATED ADULTS WITH LOW SKILLS: FINDINGS FROM THE 2014 PIAAC PRISON STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Incarcerated men and women in state and federal prisons face multiple educational and economic challenges. Disabilities and health concerns of incarcerated adults exceed that of the general population. Despite widespread availability of correctional education programs in prisons, only a small proportion of prisoners complete them. Employing quantitative data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) Prison Study (2014), this paper investigates the characteristics and assessed skill levels of incarcerated adults with less than high school education attainment. It considers how characteristics and assessed skill levels differ from the general population, as well as the role of current learning in the lives of incarcerated adults with low skills. Findings include educational and health vulnerabilities that may be heightened when formerly incarcerated adults re-enter already-stressed, impoverished communities. Adults in correctional education programs cite future jobs after release and gaining knowledge as reasons to attend education programs. Even so, the proportion of adults completing these programs and gaining credentials is even lower than earlier research reported.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Characteristics and Education Backgrounds of Incarcerated Adults

Large-scale federal decennial surveys and assessments of incarcerated adults provide substantial background information on the adult prison population. The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) Prison Study (2014) is the third such study since 1990. Incarcerated adults tend to be predominantly male (94%) and young. Eighty-one percent of incarcerated adults participating in 1992's National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) and 68% in 2003's National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) were under 40 (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007).

Incarcerated adults face staggering educational and economic barriers, both before and after serving a prison sentence. They are described in the literature as less well educated and having fewer job skills and opportunities than the general population (Brazzell, Crayton, Mukamal, Solomon, & Lindahl, 2009; Gaes, 2008; MacKenzie, 2006). MacKenzie (2006) noted an average reading level of fifth-grade equivalence in incarcerated adults. In 1992, 49% of incarcerated adults in the NALS had left high school early, as had 35% of their parents. The corresponding NAAL percentages in 2003 were 37% incarcerated adults and 26% of their parents leaving high school without graduating (Greenberg et al., 2007).

Another variable of interest is U.S. region (Northeast, South, Midwest, or West). In the general population, the proportion of adults not participating in education from the southern USA was high (Patterson, 2018).

Geographic relationships of incarceration and participation in education are seldom considered on a national basis.

Disabilities and health concerns of incarcerated adults are also noteworthy. Since learning is positively associated with health and social outcomes (OECD, 2013; Patterson & Paulson, 2016), examining health-related data is important. Health challenges are one obstacle re-entering incarcerated adults face (Lattimore et al., 2012). In 2003, 15% of both general and incarcerated populations of adults reported fair or poor health (Greenberg et al., 2007). Adults reporting diagnosed learning disabilities (LD) are overrepresented in prisons (with estimates ranging up to 26%), compared to the general population (Brazzell et al., 2009). Among incarcerated adults identified as having low skills in correctional education programs, 50% report having LD or recall receiving K-12 special education services (Weisel, Toops, & Schwarz, 2005).

Once released, many incarcerated adults return to highly impoverished—and stressed—communities (Brazzell et al., 2009), such as neighborhoods in Detroit, Michigan, and Washington, DC. In a Detroit study, researchers (Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Galea, 2015) found negative effects from widespread incarceration of adults that also extend to non-incarcerated community members. Those who hadn't been incarcerated experienced overall health and mental health challenges simply by living in impoverished neighborhoods with high rates of incarceration. Incarcerated adults return to neighborhoods in which anxiety, tension, and hypervigilance are prevalent and beneficial social relationships are limited.

Re-entering adults also face stigma and may experience low social trust (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015), factors that can relate to employability. Gellar, Garfinkel, and Western (2006) found lower employment rates for formerly incarcerated men than for men in the general population. Numerous employers were reluctant to hire adults after release. If they got jobs, those who had been incarcerated also experienced a 14% to 26% decline in hourly wages.

In the literature, a connection among educational attainment, earnings, and criminal activity was observed: with increases in education levels and earnings, the option of committing a crime could be less alluring (Bazos & Hausman, 2004; Brazzell et al., 2009). Receiving a high school equivalence (HSE) credential in prison signals positive messages to an employer about the adult's ability and achievements (Gaes, 2008). The flip side of this connection is that re-entering adults *not* experiencing increases in education levels and earnings might recidivate.

Assessed Skills of Incarcerated Adults

Baseline information on assessed skills of incarcerated adults with less than high school (LHS) education nationally began with the NALS assessment in 1992. According to Greenberg et al. (2007), assessed NALS skill levels of incarcerated adults who left school before entering high school were 205 for prose literacy and 184 for quantitative literacy on a 500-point scale for each domain. Corresponding scores for early high school leavers were 228 for prose literacy and 215 for quantitative literacy.

In 2003, adults incarcerated in U.S. state and federal prisons were assessed with the NAAL assessment. Incarcerated adults with GED® credentials or high school diplomas scored higher on measures of literacy and numeracy in 2003, an average 273 in prose literacy and 266 in quantitative literacy, than did those without credentials, an average 228 in prose literacy and 217 in quantitative literacy (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2008). Even though measured average skill levels tended to improve for prison inmates from 1992 to 2003, incarcerated adults continued to experience skills gaps compared with the general population (Brazzell et al., 2009).

Participation of Incarcerated Adults with Low Skills in Correctional Education

The extent to which incarcerated adults have access to and participate in correctional education programs is an important question. Approximately 87% of all state and federal correctional facilities have an education program, and more than 75% have adult basic and secondary education programs (MacKenzie, 2006; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000). As of 2005, 98% of federal prisons offered adult education, 66% of state prisons offered adult basic education (ABE), and 76% of state prisons offered adult secondary education (ASE; Brazzell et al., 2009).

Despite widespread availability of correctional education programs, only a small proportion of prisoners participate in programming (Brazzell et al., 2009; Cullen, Jonson, & Eck, 2012; May & Brown, 2011). The reach of programs is limited compared with need and has not kept pace with expanding prison populations; approximately 2% of adults in state and federal prisons participate in ABE and an estimated 20% in ASE (Brazzell et al., 2009). Greenberg et al. (2008) found that 19% of incarcerated adults had earned an HSE certificate while in prison, and an additional 5% were enrolled in classes.

Evidence that participation in correctional education reduces recidivism is growing. In early meta-analyses, participants in ABE and HSE preparation programs were 1.44 times as likely to experience reduced recidivism as non-participants (MacKenzie, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). A later re-entry study (Lattimore et al., 2012) found that incarcerated men who participated in HSE preparation classes generally saw positive outcomes related to recidivism. More recently, incarcerated participants in ASE programs had 30% lower odds of recidivating, and participants in correctional education had an 8% increase in odds of getting a job after release than nonparticipants (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013).

What, then, explains low participation in programs? The reasons are complex and varied. While incarcerated, some adults, especially those with lengthy sentences, may simply lack interest in correctional education or do not see its connection to employment or re-entry into society. Like adults with low skills in the general population, they may enjoy learning, yet struggle with relating new ideas to real life (Patterson, 2018). Other reasons range from lack of funding to lack of awareness of programs (Davis et al., 2013). Furthermore, in many prisons “correctional officers serve the function of planning the daily routine of the inmates, which includes their education schedule. To some extent, the correctional officers can determine which inmates can attend class on a particular day and which inmates cannot” (Messemer, 2006, p. 6).

A final point about participation is the scope of HSE testing in correctional facilities. Among three major providers of U.S. HSE tests (GED®, HiSET®, and TASC), to date only GED Testing Service reported publicly on recent correctional testing. In 2011, GED Testing Service reported nearly 75,000 incarcerated individuals took the GED® test in 1,730 correctional facilities the previous year (not limited to state and federal prisons; Patterson & Song, 2011). As of 2016 more than 48,000 incarcerated adults took GED® tests in approximately 1,100 correctional facilities (Bledsoe, 2017).

Research Questions

After review of the literature on characteristics, assessed skills, and participation of incarcerated individuals, the following research questions were developed for analysis using PIAAC Prison Study (2014) data:

1. What are the demographic and background characteristics and assessed skill levels of incarcerated adults with less than high school (LHS) education attainment?
2. How do those characteristics and assessed skill levels differ from the general population?
3. What role does learning currently play in the lives of incarcerated adults?

METHODS

Sample

PIAAC data collection relied on a complex sampling design to ensure representativeness of the population (Hogan et al., 2016). According to Rampey et al. (2016), the target population of the PIAAC Prison Study (2014) was inmates age 16 to 74 from 100 U.S. state, federal, and private prisons. A two-stage, stratified sample was selected, and the full prison sample consisted of 1,319 incarcerated adults with background questionnaires and 1,270 with assessments. Data were collected in prisons using interviewer laptops. In this paper, the sample was further limited to 400 incarcerated adults with LHS education.

Assessment Levels

Scores in literacy and numeracy ranged from 0 to 500 and were classified into one of five levels. Levels of these PIAAC skill domains were: below Level 1 (0-175), Level 1 (176-225), Level 2 (226-275), Level 3 (276-325), and Levels 4 / 5 (326-500). At Literacy Level 1, for example, an adult would be expected to read relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information which is very close to information given in the question or directive. Knowledge and skill in recognizing basic vocabulary, evaluating the meaning of sentences, and reading of paragraph text is expected (OECD, 2013).

Level 1 Numeracy tasks require the adult to carry out basic mathematical processes in common, concrete contexts. Tasks usually require simple one-step or two-step processes involving, for example, performing basic arithmetic operations; understanding simple percentages; or identifying and using elements of simple or common graphical or spatial representations (OECD, 2013). More detail on sampling, weighting, background questionnaire administration, and assessments is available in the most recent PIAAC Technical Report (Hogan et al., 2016).

Data

Variables used for analyses came from the background questionnaire (BQ) and the assessed skill domains, each of which had 10 plausible values available for use in calculating means and standard errors of scores. BQ items for demographic and background characteristics included: age in 10-year increments, male/female gender, employment status before incarceration, U.S. region, marital status, highest education level attained, age highest education level was finished, level of incomplete education, reason for stopping education before prison, highest grade completed, health status (ranging from excellent to poor), vision difficulty, hearing difficulty, reported diagnosis of LD, and two questions on levels of social trust. Variables on current participation include: current basic skills preparation, GED® preparation, other HSE preparation, highest education level while incarcerated, reason for attending current classes, reason for participating in basic skills preparation in the 12 months before PIAAC participation, extent of use of learning strategies on relating new ideas to real life, and extent of liking to learn new things.

Analyses

Sample and replicate weights were applied in all analyses. Plausible values were calculated using IDB Analyzer and SPSS 24 software for estimates of scores in literacy and numeracy. To determine if group differences in cross tabulations were practically meaningful, effect sizes were calculated with a 95% confidence threshold of twice the standard error for percentage differences. Means estimating the prison population were compared, with d as an effect size representing the magnitude of the difference. Where available, response rates of LHS incarcerated adults were compared descriptively with response rates of LHS adults in the general

population who did not participate in education in the year before PIAAC, or with LHS learners for current learning, as reported in Patterson and Paulson (2016). All analyses in this paper were descriptive, and causality should not be inferred.

FINDINGS

The first two research questions deal with demographic and background characteristics and assessed skill levels of LHS incarcerated adults. The percentage of LHS incarcerated men is 92.4% (see Table 1). With a range of 18-74 years, the median age group for all LHS incarcerated adults and for men is 25-34 years. LHS incarcerated women tend to be older; the median female age is 35-44 years.

Nearly half of LHS incarcerated adults (49.4%) come from the southern USA, a higher proportion than the rate (36.9%) in the general population, $X^2 = 24.3$, $p < .001$ (Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Although nearly three-fourths of the general population is employed (Patterson & Paulson, 2016), only 3 in 5 LHS incarcerated men and 1 in 3 women had an income from work before incarceration. Adults worked the same average length of time before prison (10 years) yet tended to experience high proportions of underemployment or unemployment, 38% for men, 95% CI [33.6, 42.4] and 53.5% for women, 95% CI [29.5, 67.5]. Compared with the general population, incarcerated adults had higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, $X^2 = 33.3$, $p < .001$. Both genders were predominantly single. Two-thirds of LHS incarcerated men and half of LHS incarcerated women had never married, unlike the general population, in which most were married, $X^2 = 228.2$, $p < .001$ (Patterson & Paulson, 2016).

Education Background

Another component of LHS incarcerated adult characteristics is education background. As shown in Table 2, most LHS incarcerated adults complete early grades of secondary education. Women tend to complete ninth grade, on average, a grade higher than men ($d = 0.27$). Though nearly all adults complete the schooling they do have by upper teen years, approximately 2 in 5 LHS incarcerated adults leave school by age 15 (see Table 2).

When asked if they ever started a degree without completing it, 3 in 10 LHS incarcerated adults (29.8%) say yes. Of those saying yes, 88.8% refer to not completing high school. External situations (3 in 5) more often than school-related reasons (2 in 5) motivated adults to leave school early (see Table 2). Women's top reasons for leaving school (in order) were pregnancy/illness/disability, not liking school, and family illness or death. Men's top reasons for leaving school were incarceration, not liking school, and wanting to work.

Health and Social Trust

The final components of LHS incarcerated adult characteristics analyzed are health and social trust. About half endorse excellent or very good health and one fourth good health. More than a fourth (27.7%) reports having fair or poor health, 95% CI [24.1, 31.3]. Two fifths of women report fair or poor health (39.2%), 95% CI [31.8, 46.6], significantly higher than the 26.8% of men doing so, 95% CI [23.0, 30.6], $X^2 = 10.5$, $p < .05$. Aggregate rates for vision difficulties are 20.4%, 95% CI [16.6, 24.2] and 15.2% for hearing difficulties, 95% CI [10.6, 19.8]. These rates are nearly twice the rates, 11.4% for vision and 8.7% for hearing, of the general population, $X^2 = 49.8$, $p < .001$ and $X^2 = 29.7$, $p < .001$, respectively (Patterson & Paulson, 2016). More than a third of LHS incarcerated adults report diagnoses of LD (37.1%), 95% CI [31.6, 42.5], which is four times the general population LD rate of 8%, $X^2 = 324.5$, $p < .001$ (Patterson & Paulson, 2016).

Two measures of social trust allow incarcerated adults to agree or disagree that they trust only a few

people completely or that people take advantage of them if they are not careful. Results indicate rates of social trust among LHS incarcerated adults are very low. The vast majority of LHS incarcerated adults (84.0%) agree or strongly agree that they trust only a few people completely, 95% CI [78.0, 90.0]. Similarly, 86.1% of LHS incarcerated adults agree or strongly agree with the statement that people take advantage of them, 95% CI [79.9, 92.3].

Assessed Skill Levels

LHS incarcerated adults' scores in literacy and numeracy are analyzed (PSTRE scores are not analyzed because of the extent of missing data for this technology assessment in the prison setting). Mean literacy scores (224, SE 2.8) place LHS incarcerated adults at the upper end of Level 1. As described in the Methods section, at this level, adults read relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information, recognize basic vocabulary, and evaluate the meaning of sentences. In numeracy, scores of LHS incarcerated adults average at the lower end of Level 1 (187, SE 3.1). Numeracy tasks at Level 1 usually involve one- or two-step processes requiring basic arithmetic or employing simple graphs.

Role of Current Learning

Current learning is the topic for the third research question. One-third of LHS incarcerated adults indicate pursuing a formal education program (see Table 3). Proportionately few achieve HSE or postsecondary education (PSE) credentials during incarceration, however. Of those pursuing formal education, about 45% participate in basic skills instruction and 56% in GED® preparation activities.

LHS incarcerated adults endorse three top reasons for taking basic skills: getting a job post-release, increasing knowledge, or meeting a requirement. The highest ranked reason is to increase skills or knowledge; approximately 1 in 3 adults select that reason. A small proportion are required to participate.

A last consideration for current learning is the extent of use of two learning strategies associated with nonparticipation in education in the general population (Patterson, 2018): liking to learn new things and relating new ideas to real life. Almost 4 in 5 of LHS incarcerated adults (78.9%) report liking to learn new things to a high/very high extent, 95% CI [72.7, 85.1]. On the other hand, only 29.3% of LHS incarcerated adults, 95% CI [27.1, 31.5], can relate new ideas to real life to a high/very high extent, indicating that 7 in 10 adults struggle with connecting new concepts to experiences in daily life. This finding may reflect, at least in part, lack of opportunity to apply learning in a restricted prison setting.

DISCUSSION

Rampey et al. (2016) wrote that characteristics of incarcerated adults overall were significantly different from the general population in almost every demographic comparison they made. Major demographic differences are apparent for LHS incarcerated adults as well. Compared with the general LHS population, the southern region is overrepresented among LHS incarcerated adults. LHS incarcerated adults were less frequently employed before incarceration and more often single or never married than in the general population (Patterson & Paulson, 2016).

Several meaningful findings indicate potential vulnerabilities for LHS incarcerated adults following release. The finding that two-fifths of LHS incarcerated adults leave school before their mid-teens, most often for external reasons rather than school-related reasons, points to interrupted education at early ages. Figures indicate a sizable population of incarcerated adults without basic literacy and numeracy skills, not

counting those who may have completed higher grades with skills below their peers (MacKenzie, 2006). Without high school skill levels, adults are left educationally vulnerable, both before and after incarceration. This vulnerability is heightened in impoverished communities already experiencing anxiety, tension, and hypervigilance (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015). When adults re-enter society after completing a sentence, re-entry service providers must be prepared to respond to adults' external, family, and community circumstances as they seek basic education and employment.

Findings on participation in correctional education programming are mixed. Participation in basic skills instruction and GED preparation is higher than that found in Brazzell et al. (2009). Adults in these programs cite future jobs after release and gaining knowledge as reasons to attend. This finding supports Brazzell et al.'s (2009) assertion: "By expanding students' general abilities and providing specific skills, education can make it easier for returning prisoners to find stable, well-paying jobs." Even so, the proportion of adults completing these programs and gaining credentials is even lower than a decade earlier (Greenberg et al., 2008) and continues to need improvement. Prison officials have an opportunity to review adult participation in basic skills and HSE preparation in local settings and to identify ways more incarcerated adults can participate in this programming to reduce recidivism after release.

While in prison, women report higher rates of fair or poor health (39.2%) than do men (26.8%), and both rates are substantially higher than the 15% found 10 years earlier (Greenberg et al., 2007). While cross-sectional PIAAC data do not permit review of trends, these data do indicate that health challenges for LHS incarcerated adults may be even more prominent than a decade ago. Correctional educators need to be aware of potential health issues among adults that may require either referral to health services or special supports for instruction. Re-entry services need to make health screenings available and assist re-entering adults with finding and accessing healthcare.

The nearly doubled rates of vision or hearing difficulties and quadrupled rates of LD (37.1%) among LHS incarcerated adults compared with the general population (Patterson & Paulson, 2016; Rampey et al., 2016) point to adults with critical health concerns and challenges from disabilities that can affect their learning as well as re-entry after release (Brazzell et al., 2009; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015; Lattimore et al., 2012; OECD, 2013). As Weisel et al. (2005) noted, these challenges may go unnoticed and unaccommodated. An incarcerated learner in their study talked about effects on his life: "No one ever said anything to me [about learning challenges]. How could they let me end up in the 11th grade with a second-grade education?... I have been incarcerated 10-15 years of my life because [of] my lack of education." Acknowledgement of challenges, along with appropriate accommodations in adult learning, can support adults as they move forward. Additionally, both correctional and re-entry education programs need to review the instructional and support services they provide incarcerated or re-entering adults with LD, to ensure those services facilitate learning.

The incarcerated population of LHS adults also differs in literacy and numeracy skill levels. Compared with national averages at the upper end of Level 2 (Rampey et al., 2016), mean scores of LHS incarcerated adults are much lower. Average scores at the upper end of Level 1 for literacy skills and the lower end of Level 1 for numeracy skills signal substantial difficulties in reading and using information and in solving mathematical problems beyond very basic levels. Low skill levels hamper further development of skills that most incarcerated adults report wanting to gain. Correctional and re-entry education programs that serve incarcerated or re-entering adults must fully assess entering learners to determine current skill levels and screen for unmet needs that could hamper or halt learning.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A first limitation is that PIAAC data do not provide information on quality or dosage of correctional education in prison settings. Future studies could consider qualitative elements of correctional education programs that serve LHS incarcerated adults, such as what types of instruction are offered, the dosage of instruction, and ways programs vary between prisons. Another caveat to analyses is that they are all descriptive in nature and causality should not be inferred. Also, because PIAAC is a cross-sectional survey and significant changes in background questions and assessments occurred since NAAL and NALS, direct comparisons across time are not feasible.

This paper, while informative about characteristics, backgrounds, skill levels, and current learning of incarcerated individuals with low skills, generates new questions that future researchers may wish to investigate. To begin with, while increased participation is positive news, the decline in LHS incarcerated adults completing correctional basic skills programs and attaining credentials is a strong concern. PIAAC data do not capture information on circumstances surrounding access to and completion of programs. What factors influence the small proportion of prisoners participating in and completing available programming (Brazzell et al., 2009; Cullen et al., 2012; May & Brown, 2011)? What components of participation are related to adult outcomes?

Additionally, the findings on health need further investigation so that the connection of health issues with education can be expanded for informing policy and practice. For example, what explains high rates of fair and poor health among incarcerated adults? Since the data indicate health issues, particularly for women, may stem from formative school years, what are the long-term trends in health that incarcerated adults experience, and how do those trends relate to their incarceration and re-entry experiences? More investigation of connections of health factors with learning in correctional settings is needed.

Finally, more needs to be known about assessed skills of LHS incarcerated adults. A detailed review of assessed literacy and numeracy skills was beyond the scope of this paper, but other informative group comparisons could be made, such as by age, parental education level, or employment status before incarceration. As future scholars investigate these questions, they will add to the knowledge base on incarcerated adults with low skills and add to potential solutions that support further learning, both in and after prison. ☞

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TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LHS INCARCERATED ADULTS

Characteristic	LHS Incarcerated Adults (%) [95% CI]
Gender	92.4 [91.0, 93.8] male
Age	
16-24 years	19.5 [15.9, 23.1]
25-34 years	35.7 [30.7, 40.7]
35-44 years	22.6 [17.6, 27.6]
45-74 years	22.3 [18.1, 26.4]
Region of USA	
Northeast	9.4 [7.4, 11.4]
Midwest	17.6 [12.6, 22.6]
South	49.4 [44.2, 54.6]
West	23.6 [19.4, 27.8]
Employed FT	44.8 [40.0, 49.6]
Employed PT	14.8 [11.2, 18.4]
Unemployed	23.5 [19.3, 27.7]
Never / Previously Married	85.6 [81.8, 89.4]
Married	14.4 [10.8, 18.0]

Source: PIAAC Prison Study (2014), National Center for Education Statistics.

TABLE 2: EDUCATION BACKGROUND OF LHS INCARCERATED ADULTS

Background Characteristic	LHS Incarcerated Adults (%) [95% CI]
Highest Grade Completed	
None to Grade 6	11.2 [7.8, 14.6]
Grade 7 to 9	88.8 [85.0, 92.6]
Grade Completed (Mean)	8.8
Age of Highest Education Level	
Up to Age 15	40.8 [34.4, 47.2]
16 to 19 Years	55.8 [49.2, 62.4]
Top Reasons for Leaving School	
Did Not Like School	18.1 [14.3, 21.9]
Did Not Do Well in School	9.4 [6.4, 12.4]
Asked to Leave School	11.7 [8.4, 14.9]
Wanted to Work	16.6 [13.0, 20.2]
Pregnancy / Illness / Disability	2.6 [1.6, 3.6]
Incarceration	17.5 [12.9, 22.1]
Family Death or Illness	6.1 [2.9, 9.3]

Source: PIAAC Prison Study (2014), National Center for Education Statistics.

TABLE 3: CURRENT LEARNING OF LHS INCARCERATED ADULTS

Current Learning	LHS Incarcerated Adults (%) [95% CI]
Currently Pursuing Formal Education	36.4 [31.4, 41.4]
Basic Skills Tutor or Class	45.4 [40.0, 50.8]
GED Preparation	55.9 [50.9, 60.9]
Other HSE	4.7 [1.1, 8.3]
Gained HSE Credential in Prison	5.4 [2.6, 8.2]
Awarded PSE Certificate or Diploma	2.2 [0.8, 3.6]
Top Reasons for Learning Basic Skills	
To increase job chances post-release	29.8 [23.3, 35.4]
Increase knowledge and skills	26.7 [21.3, 32.1]
Required to participate	17.8 [12.4, 23.2]
Top Reasons for Any Current Learning	
To increase job chances post-release	20.4 [12.8, 28.0]
Increase knowledge and skills	32.9 [24.9, 40.9]
Required to participate	16.4 [8.4, 24.4]

Source: PIAAC Prison Study (2014), National Center for Education Statistics.

LESS RIGOR, MORE VIGOR; THE RIGOR WILL COME THROUGH THE ADAPTIVE PROCESS

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Between the three authors, we have over 50 years of experience working in education, transitions, law enforcement, and corrections. As we have collaborated over the years and woven our different backgrounds, knowledge, and experience together, we have come to realize that programs, both educational and corrections, come and go as often as reoffenders enter and reenter our programs.

During one of the new program transitions, Jeff and Mark encountered a situation with one of their corrections students that set them on an ever-changing course: an adventure to adapt to the personal needs of each individual student.

Kenny had been in and out of the system since his first juvenile offense in his early teens. Now in his late 30s, looking like a man in his late 50s from the use of drugs and alcohol and the harsh conditions of manual labor, he entered our program for the third time, with hopes of completing his Adult Education Diploma or GED® that he had not completed on previous visits.

The school's outdated, less-rigorous paper packet program had been replaced with a computer-based, more-rigorous curriculum; which was being met with controversy and heartburn that included formatting problems, limited inmate access, security issues, and questions of whether the new curriculum was rigorous enough and aligned with core requirements.

When Kenny came into class with the swagger of "I've been here before and know the process" he said, "Alright, give me some packets so I can get this thing done."

As we started to explain the new program and the new ways of doing things, he responded, "I like the old way. Why the change?"

A word from our training popped out of one of us, "More rigor!"

Disillusioned, Kenny made his way to a seat and sat there quietly. After a few minutes he asked if he could use a dictionary. As we helped other students, Kenny thumbed through the dictionary and finally blurted out, "Oh, I get it."

One of us inquired, "You get what?"

"Rigor: exhaustive, severity, strictness, inflexibility, adversity, discomfort....should I read more?" Kenny responded.

About the same time the door buzzed and the inmate students were led out for lunch.

Jeff and Mark looked at each other, looked at the dictionary left on his desk, quietly gathered their things, and silently walked down the cold, stark hall to their own lunch break.

As they sat eating, the silence was finally broken with the words, “Is this what it’s come to, incarceration not education?” One had verbalized what both were thinking.

After a nervous laugh, the numbing sounds of the cafeteria, and a period of who knows how long of listening to each other chew, the silence and the bewildered thoughts were jolted back when Mark said, “We need less rigor and more vigor.”

It was met with a resounding, “Yes, more energy, enthusiasm, robust, healthy effort.”

Then the scope of the task hit when Jeff uttered, “How?”

Undaunted from then, until this very day, and now with Darrell’s input, we have met each core requirement, every challenge of validity, and every one of the setbacks. We looked to everything we had learned and experienced, and searched any source we could find, to discover ways that we could give our students more energy to accomplish their task: a better, healthier perspective of progress, and a robust, enthusiastic vigor for their education and life-long learning.

Now, we create an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) whether the student is Special Education or not—everyone is an individual, bringing different strengths and weaknesses to us.

We first identify the missing concepts and/or components and the passion for life; whether it was educational, emotional, or maladaptive behaviors from misinformation and/or ill-formed bad habits.

To do this, we first address the often bewildered look we’d get from students when filling out their application and coming to the question, “What is your occupational goal?”

We would clarify, “What’s your dream job?”

More often than not, we’d get a blank stare from a student and something like, “I’ve never thought about that before.”

Wow! We asked around another collaborative lunch, “Where did our educational system fail these individual students?”

There wasn’t one answer and the answers only came when we started treating each and every student as individual and asking questions that questioned traditional methods and ways of doing things.

Jeff remembered his experience of having high school special education students prepare for their IEP meeting by taking a Career Cluster and Interest Survey to drive the transition portion of the meeting and identify a student’s career goal they might have for the future. So, now, instead of handing a new student an application, the first thing we have new students do is just that, a Career Cluster and Interest Survey. Now students have a clear reason for accomplishing their diploma or GED® credential and preparing and setting goals to reach their desired career.

This created new problems, though not necessarily bad ones. First was when the students got to the question, “What is your career goal?” They were now thinking of all the possibilities that the results of the interest survey offered. We had to reassure students that we would not hold them to the one they put down and that it may change over time as they learned more about each category.

Secondly, the students wanted to spend all their class time researching career possibilities instead of doing the assigned work needed for their diploma.

During this period of time, Jeff attended a conference and, while browsing the vendor tables, he came

upon the *Workforce Career Companion* published by McGraw-Hill. There was a companion booklet for each of the 16 government career categories from the career cluster and interest survey result sheet. Jeff also learned of grants available for programs with different areas of focus, one being transitions. A grant was written, money was received, and books were purchased. Students were now given the reward of checking one out and taking it back to their cell if they completed their work for their diploma or GED® credential.

This created a third good problem. More and more students started showing up to class. They had seen the career booklets and wanted one. Some students were potential diploma and GED® students, but others were individuals who had advanced degrees and careers.

This brought up the question, 'How can we serve these individuals and not distract from our diploma-GED® program?' Once we collaborated with our administration, we discovered that the government allows programs like ours to offer remediation and count level gains of individuals who have a high school diploma or GED® credential. The reward system came into play again. Individuals do the testing, enroll as a student, increase learning in a core area, and gain access to the classroom library. Now, students working towards their diploma or GED® credential had 24-hour access to answers to their questions from other inmates with higher levels of education.

Inmates are now involved in learning with an attitude of self-determination and a self-driven career path. The chance to give service through tutoring adds to everyone's self-worth and confidence and creates an environment of community and a desire to contribute to that community.

Other questions surfaced as students showed impatience with not knowing certain concepts or being bored with the concepts being re-taught over and over again for new or lower-level students. One of the main questions was, "How can we individualize and focus on what the individual student needs, rather than teach the same lesson to those who may not understand or who may not need it?"

The answer came again from another publication from McGraw-Hill. (No, this is not a promotion for McGraw-Hill.) These are the books we already had or found in our search for materials. These books are entitled *Achieving TABE Success* and have the core subjects of Reading, Math and Language. There is a pre-test at the front, a chart telling the students what pages to review for help with each of the concepts they missed, and a post-test in the back to see how their remediation went.

Some of the time, the student could review and accomplish the work on their own. Other times, they would need a little explanation from a tutor and they were on their way. Still other times, they would spend class time with a teacher showing them different strategies and approaches.

As students built on their knowledge quickly and efficiently, their desire to learn more increased. As this knowledge increased, their confidence in their individual ability to gain knowledge ignited. When their confidence was refined through continued practice, their problem-solving skills were being fine-tuned. Students became individual learners, working through barriers and gaining understanding of when to ask for help and that it was okay to ask for assistance; the students increased the rigor on their own, at their pace.

Those students working on their last few credits for their diploma accomplished mounds of work because of the new-found confidence that came through learning basic strategies, methods, and approaches. Their frustrations were fewer because they knew they could ask questions in a safe environment that would not criticize or judge them for not remembering a concept, not being there on the day the concept was taught, or not having the right strategy presented to them to fit their individual learning style.

Students with too many credits to earn a diploma and who are preparing to take the GED® tests remediated with the *Achieving TABE Success* until they were at a high school level. We then had them take

the GED Ready® on GED.com. From this, we would print the concepts to review sheet that had specific page numbers on it. Then, we were able to select one of the GED® remediation publications, we had the Steck–Vaughn *Test Preparation for the GED® Test* books, and students could study those pages.

Once the students had gone through the process with the TABE books, they were able to navigate through the rest of their remediation with little assistance. The focus and purpose the students received by identifying a path for their career and life, then going through the process of learning the strategies and approaches for their individual learning style, gave them the confidence to work through the materials and gain the knowledge they needed to earn their diploma or pass their GED® tests. Because of this new empowerment, students have the courage and desire to seek and accomplish more learning and training in their desired field, increasing their salaries and quality of life.

After tackling this major achievement in their lives, Darrell realized the students could adapt this process to be used in any situation they would face in life. They could address maladaptive habits and behaviors by applying the knowledge gained, foster their new ability to activate the learning process, and offer an open mind willing to change.

Instead of acting out, checking out, or dropping out, the students develop the inner power and strength to discover passions, build their abilities, create a new motivation and mindset, and realize their worth. They participate less in distracting thoughts, conversations, and activities.

We, as educators, corrections advocates, or citizens for better communities, must embrace the adaptive process and use our creativity to overcome maladaptive habits and behaviors of services as usual or one class fits all. The Adaptive Process approach and techniques will achieve success for every individual. As we adapt with vigor, we are continually seeking and refining answers to these questions: What in my thoughts, feelings and actions are stunting my progress? What in my process is hindering others' progress? When we are successful, we will not only have less rigor in our being, but more vigor for life and purpose, and vigor to share. The motto is something like this: Embracing The Adaptive Process to discover the impactful, uplifting purpose of thinking, feeling, and acting that can develop my worth as an individual and contribute to the world community. ☘

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Mark VanVoorhis is a teacher with over 14 years of experience working with court ordered students with issues that are gang and drug related. Mark is certified in K-Adult Education and is certified in U.S. History, English, and has endorsements in ESL and TABE.

EMPLOYER RESERVATION AND EX-OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Ex-offenders have a variety of characteristics that limit their employment potential, including convictions affecting work opportunities, substance abuse challenges, limited work experiences, insufficient education and cognitive skills, and perceptions the public has about prisoners. The primary purpose for this research is to learn more about the differences between employer willingness to hire and employer hiring practice of ex-offenders with drug-related convictions in a Mid-Atlantic region. This study evaluated whether organizational characteristics such as industry, firm size, and amount of customer contact; a credible referral system the employer trusts; and employers' previous experiences hiring ex-offenders relate to hiring reservation. Of the varying research areas, credible referral systems produced the most encouraging results in terms of hiring likelihood.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

At the close of 2015, an estimated 4.65 million people, or 1 in 53 adults, in the United States were supervised by an adult correctional community system (Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). Of the 4.65 million, 25% of probationers and 31% of parolees, an approximate 1.21 million people, had been convicted of a drug-related charge in or prior to 2015 (Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). Furthermore, these percentages have remained unchanged when comparing 2005 to 2014 (Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). In their 2015 annual report, Delaware's Bureau of Community Corrections (BCC) Probation and Parole estimates supervising more than 16,000 men (77%) and women (23%) in the community on probation, parole, or home confinement (State of Delaware, Department of Correction, 2015). In their three-year study on recidivism in Delaware, Weidlein-Crist and Huenke (2017) found that of the 3,267 released participants during 2011–2013, 26.6% (N=871) were convicted for drug dealing or other drug-related offense. The percentages found in the Delaware report on recidivism and the national percentages are similar for ex-offenders with drug-related criminal histories.

Statement of the Problem

Barriers to employment are numerous, and include exclusion from licensed and professional jobs, little work history, low education attainment, lack of available jobs in minority communities, crime type, and stigma associated with criminal history. Raphael (2014) presents four areas of consideration for employer reservation: a) insurance effort, cost, paperwork, and time involved for an ex-offender; b) liability and risk associated with potential harm from the ex-offender/employee toward customers as it relates to previous crime; c) laws prohibiting the hire of convicted individuals; and d) questionable honesty and integrity of ex-offenders. Several studies confirm time spent in prison considerably lowers ex-offenders' likelihood of becoming employed as well as their actual earnings when compared to people without criminal histories (Loeffler, 2013; Pettit & Lyons, 2007; Schmitt & Warner, 2010; Western, 2002). Studies have indicated a reduction in employment acquisition

of 5% to 30% (Freeman, 1991; Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2006; Waldfogel, 1994) and decreased earnings of 10% to 20% (Lott, 1990; Waldfogel, 1994; Western, 2002). When decreased employment acquisition and earnings are experienced by the ex-offender, one response may be to re-engage in drug dealing to make up for monetary shortages (Richardson & Flower, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The number of people having spent time in prison for drug-related convictions, and subsequently, the number being released after time served, has grown due to an increase in sentencing and sentencing length for drug offenses since the mid-1990's (Schmitt & Warner, 2010; Western, 2002). Research has demonstrated employers are more likely to consider hiring ex-offenders with non-violent drug convictions over those with violent convictions (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Dundes & Giguere, 2002; Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003; Pager & Quillian, 2005). Byers (2011) speaks to the three "non's" when it comes to criminal charges, non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual. Drug-related crimes are often non-violent (i.e.: using, possessing, and manufacturing). In their report on Delaware crime, Rager and Salt (2016) list drug and narcotic offenses as serious crimes, but they are not categorized as violent crimes.

Model

The model in Figure 1 hypothesizes an overall negative relationship between organizational characteristics (independent variables) and employer hiring reservation (dependent variable). Ex-offender characteristics, such as character referencing, are included in the model as moderator variables. The literature review examines how organizational characteristics (industry, firm size, previous experience hiring ex-offenders) and ex-offender characteristics (academic and occupational skills, evidence of crime-free lifestyles) have impacted employer and hiring managers' decisions to hire ex-offenders.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

In a qualitative study on employer perception of drug offending and drug-addicted populations, Lutman, Lynch, and Monk-Turner (2015) conducted interviews in an all-male residential drug treatment facility where employers hired ex-offenders to operate delivery services for business/residential locations and cleaning services for office buildings. Hiring efforts by these employers were purposeful, generating the following four primary themes: offering second chances, being charitable in the local community, participants were grateful employees, and lastly, employers were willing to help ex-offenders reintegrate into communities (Lutman et al., 2015). Additionally, and significantly, effective relationships were in place between employers and facility program administrators, and the employers were familiar with the process toward recovery.

After performing a mail and telephone study of 103 employers in communities with high and low concentrations of ex-offender residents, Atkin and Armstrong (2013) found employers demonstrated a greater willingness to hire ex-offenders when the employer also had a criminal past. Cerda, Stenstrom, and Curtis (2015) investigate how type of crime and work qualifications influence employer decisions to hire ex-offenders to address the high unemployment rate of this population.

Drug Convicted Populations

From a historical perspective, Travis, Western, and Redburn (2014) depict national trends in the categories of drug arrests from the 1960's through 2010. Drug-related arrests showed significant spikes in the 1980's and mid-2000's, and can be seen as the category of crime with the highest rate of incarceration in the United States per 100,000 people (Travis et al., 2014). Beck and Blumstein (as cited in Travis et al., 2014) confirm this dramatic increase by comparing drug-related incarcerations of 15ppl/100k during 1980 to 143ppl/100k during

2010. Travis et al. (2014) advance the difficulty in defining, capturing, and measuring drug-related arrests as drug use, abuse, and dealing are often linked to other crimes. In 2014, more than 1.5 million arrests (13.9% of all arrests) were made for drug abuse violations in the U.S. (United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015). Delaware experienced 6,163 arrests (13.1% of all arrests) for drug abuse violations in 2014, the fourth highest reason for arrest after property crime, other assaults and larceny/theft (Table 1) (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015).

Labeling

Researchers studying labeling theory (Davies & Tanner, 2003; Haslewood-Pocsik, Brown, & Spencer, 2008; Jones-Young & Powell, 2015) would suggest categorization, specific to incarcerated populations, negatively impacts long-term employment potential. Labeling theory has several interpretations and related consequences including a) society's contribution to the promotion of delinquent behaviors by those who have been labeled deviant (Becker, 1963); b) the act of deviant labeling itself, which impairs individuals' self-images and influences the company they keep (Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989), and c) the negative effects of labeling on attained and sustained employment (Davies & Tanner, 2003). Labeling theory is not used to describe the onset of deviant behaviors, but provides a perspective of a process, showing how behaviors continue and/or escalate over time (Williams, 1976). Tannenbaum (as cited in Williams, 1976) describes the progressive change in identity experienced by the person engaged in mischievous behavior as his/her community observes these behaviors over time. In essence, the community increases its recognition and expectation that negative behaviors will continue by the individual as the individual accepts this new defiant identity as their own. Becker (1963) shares that, while labeling may not cause an individual to continue to disobey laws or norms, it is likely to place that person in social networks involved in law-breaking activities, increasing the likelihood of continuous deviance. Bernburg, Krohn, and Rivera (2006) found that teenagers exposed to the juvenile justice system were increasingly likely to become involved with peers already engaged in higher levels of delinquency. Sampson and Laub (1997) distinguish disadvantaged youth as being more susceptible to harmful effects of labeling than peers with access to monetary and social resources. Although several, sometimes conflicting, interpretations of labeling theory are available, the adaptations above are alike in that they diminish the opportunities (i.e.: employment, normal routines) of those being labeled. Delinquent behavior and increased criminal activity in adolescents decrease time in school, potential academic achievements, and opportunities for employment and work experiences.

Desistance

Desistance from criminal behavior has several definitions; research in this field agrees desistance is not an event, but rather a process (Brame, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2003; Hearn, 2010; Laub & Sampson, 2001). Desistance occurs as individuals who have maintained patterns of criminal lifestyles decrease their criminal activity and participation in criminal behaviors over time as explained by aging, maturation, rational choice, life course, social control, developmental, and other theories (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Kazemian, 2007). Two perspectives of desistance from crime are adopted for this research. The first perspective looks to the theory of social control, suggesting that offenders begin and continue to desist as their ties to secure employment and positive, supportive relationships increase (Hearn, 2010; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Rhodes, 2008; Uggen & Staff, 2001). The second perspective looks to the identity theory of desistance, which suggests that when an offender realizes the cost of criminal behaviors outweigh the benefits, a move is initiated to change the identity (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Uggen and Staff (2001) found a small but consistent negative relationship between employment satisfaction and recidivism among adult ex-offenders. Stable employment for the ex-offender represents a support mechanism for their family and a structural mechanism playing a

central role in desistance from criminal activity (Rhodes, 2008). This structural mechanism is explained by Farrall (2003), who speaks about employment for the ex-offender in terms of an opportunity to establish good work habits, including working with non-offenders, setting goals, and carrying out assigned tasks. Bushway & Apel (2012) state employers have no means of observing an ex-offender engaged in the process of desistance until they have been hired. As such, the recommendation is to look at observable indicators, which Bushway & Apel (2012) call signals, providing evidence an ex-offender is indeed in the process of desistance. Participation in a reentry program versus non-participation, and program completion versus inconsistent attendance or dropping out are observable indicators employers may use as additional information about people with criminal histories. McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna (2012) stated that ex-offenders involved in the process of desisting from crime were found to have a sense of purpose for their lives, a sense of control over their futures, and a desire to help others avoid similar mistakes, opposing the identity issues found in labeling.

Academic and Vocational Opportunities

Offenders frequently lack vocational skills or stable work experiences (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013), increasing the challenges faced when returning to the community. The finding of overall lower levels of education and cognitive skills prior to incarceration, in addition to other characteristics, may be an indication of future employment concerns, irrespective of the consequences of the conviction (Pager, 2007; Visher, Smolter, & O’Connell, 2010). Gaes (2008) suggests that when offenders earn certificates or credentials in prison, it may indicate to potential employers that the ex-offender is able to complete assigned tasks and responsibilities. In terms of employment outcomes, Davis et al. (2013) found in their meta-analyses an 8% higher chance of gaining employment for ex-offenders who participated in prison academic programs and a 28% higher chance of gaining employment for ex-offenders participating in prison vocational instruction than those who did not participate in correctional education.

Low-Skilled Employment. Visser and Meléndez (2015) describe a significant change to the labor market and economy beginning 2001 through 2008 leading to what they called “a new low-wage economy.” This is characterized by the global integration of trade, polarized wages, the shift from manufacturing to low-paying service industries, and a minimum wage allowing families to meet, but not exceed, the poverty level. One in three jobs were considered low-wage before the recessionary period, while the greatest number of job openings since 2010 has been in this class, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (as cited in Visser & Meléndez, 2015). Sharpley and Dougherty (2016) report that the occupations which will experience the most growth in Delaware through 2024 will be retail salespeople, food preparers, and cashiers. To illustrate low-wage job approximations, the 2014 average wage of the lowest 93 lowest-paying job categories in Delaware (of 464 occupations) was less than \$31,000 (Sharpley & Dougherty, 2016). While occupational growth in Delaware has been identified in specific job industries, ex-offenders are faced with competition from low-skilled adults, low-experienced youth joining the labor force, and retired individuals needing supplemental income, all potentially with criminal-free backgrounds. Awareness of viable work opportunities is therefore crucial for the ex-offending population. Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson (2014) use information from the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), to report which job sectors hired 4,096 ex-offenders over the course of the research period: from their release in 2005 through 2009. The time frame captured in this Indiana Department of Corrections study is unique in that it includes the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession mentioned above. Nally et al. (2014) found that ex-offenders, if employed, work in labor-intensive, low-paying jobs below the poverty line in the sectors of administrative support/waste management, food services, manufacturing, construction, retail trade, and health care/social assistance. Atkin and Armstrong (2013) found a higher likelihood of employment for ex-offenders in the automotive, construction, culinary,

maintenance, carpentry, electrical, and plumbing industries.

METHODOLOGY

Employers and human resource professionals with hiring responsibilities were selected as primary participants to share their perspectives about their hiring practices of ex-offenders with drug-related convictions in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The survey instrument (Appendix A) consists of twenty-five questions (14: Likert-scale; 4: open-ended; 1: rank-based; 4: multiple-choice). The survey sought employer feedback to the extent they agreed or disagreed with statements concerning ex-offender risk, previous work experience, academic accomplishment, and character referencing. Open-ended questions inquired about the pros and cons of hiring ex-offenders and whether employers perceive drug-convicted populations differently than other ex-offenders. The selection of the following seven organizational sectors was guided by the review of literature: food and hospitality, retail, maintenance and janitorial, manufacturing, construction, automotive, and transportation and warehousing (Atkin & Armstrong, 2013; Nally et al., 2014).

Target Population and Sampling Procedure

Projected data acquired from the Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information (OOLMI) covering a region within the U.S. Mid-Atlantic predicted the potential number of jobs by industry of the seven selected organizational types. Table 2 estimates some growth in the identified industries of study with the exception of manufacturing, which shows a decline in the number of jobs in both the two- and ten-year projections. While some may argue the greatest growth shown in Table 2 may derive from jobs requiring greater skills, this growth includes the role of Construction Laborer and Helper, defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as one who receives on-the-job-training after being hired, typically not requiring formal education (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Forecasts suggest job opportunities may be available over the next two- and ten-year periods in six of the seven selected organizational industries in which employers expressed a willingness to hire certain types of ex-offenders.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The principal investigator gained support of the local chapters of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Workforce Development Board (WDB) to distribute the survey instrument (Appendix A) to human resource professionals and employers. SHRM's local Chapter Administrator agreed to email the survey to its approximate distribution list of 300 members, inclusive of organizational sectors outside the scope of this study. Employers received an introduction to the survey, including the rationale for involvement, a brief disclosure on the voluntary nature of their involvement, and assurance of their anonymity. They completed the 25-question survey electronically, in approximately 12 minutes using an internet-based, survey software application. The instrument remained open for approximately 1.5 months (with a reminder email prior to close) to allot for varying work schedules. 32% (N=96) of employers attempted to complete the survey and, of those, 54% (N=52) met the target industry criteria for completeness. In-person interviews with three respondents (Appendix B) offered an opportunity to share experiences and practice conversationally. Quantitative and qualitative questions were prepared simultaneously and conducted concurrently.

FINDINGS

Employer reservation, as defined in this text, is the difference between employer willingness and employer practice relative to hiring ex-offenders with drug-related convictions. The construct for employer reservation was assessed for reliability through an index of survey questions:

- Upon release from prison, ex-offenders are involved in activities that will help them turn their lives around.
- The process of hiring an ex-offender is more difficult than hiring someone without a criminal background.
- The organization is assuming a greater risk when hiring an ex-offender as compared to a person with no criminal history.

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with these statements on a six-point scale (Appendix A), where score values were: definitely false = 1 (very weak reservation); mostly false = 2 (slight reservation); somewhat false = 3 (modest reservation); somewhat true = 4 (moderate reservation); mostly true = 5 (strong reservation); and definitely true = 6 (very strong reservation). Reservation, in general, has a negative connotation, along the lines of unwillingness or reluctance, so the interpretation of weak reservation is encouraging, while strong reservation is discouraging. As an average ($M=2.6$), employers express slight to modest reservation when referencing risk in hiring an ex-offender with drug convictions, the hiring process, and likelihood of ex-offender's involvement in positive activities. 34 of 41 employers express very weak to modest reservation when considering this construct; for the sample, this is encouraging!

In response to labelling theory discussed in the literature review, it was presupposed that employers are more inclined to hire ex-offenders if a verification system the employer trusted were in place. The construct for a trustworthy referral system was assessed for reliability through an index of survey questions:

- Ex-offender has been referred to your organization by a person or validation system you trust.
- Ex-offender can produce documents to verify completion of a treatment or intervention program (re-entry, substance abuse, soft skills, and transitional employment).
- Colleagues told me about satisfactory experiences in hiring ex-offenders.

The scale had a high level of internal consistency as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.889, as well as a mean which indicated employers in the sample were somewhat likely ($M = 4.2$) to hire (Tables 3, 4).

To determine whether statistically significant differences exist between likelihood of hiring given trustworthy verification index and organizational industry, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted. Figure 3 shows the automotive, retail, and food and hospitality sectors having no difference in this sample ($M = 4.3$), with the greatest difference occurring between the construction ($M = 3.6$) and manufacturing ($M = 4.8$) sectors.

A central theme that appeared among interview responses surrounding character referrals was the credibility of the referrer in tandem with prioritization. Interviewees provided insight on the volume of applications that are screened on a regular basis; having a credible person or system in place to verify ex-offender applicants assists the process. "...that's a great filter for me; somebody supports them...so it does allow me to put them on a priority list" (J. Stone, personal communication, October 26, 2017). Given that screening processes take time, interviewees shared the value of legitimate sources versus suspicious or questionable referrals.

Interview participants additionally discussed differences in the types and quality of the referrer or referral system, which impact the hiring manager's decision to employ the ex-offender applicant. Referral systems include state-funded programs, staffing agencies, schools, partner employers, libraries, and local outreach initiatives. Some referral systems have a more thorough screening process than others, and, therefore, the knowledge of the client is much greater. A librarian, an example provided, assists someone using the services offered at the local branch (P. West, personal communication, October 24, 2017). Though helpful to the job

applicant, the librarian's role and resources may not be equipped to provide relevant information to the employer. Furthermore, ex-offender applicants arriving through a referral organization with a less-than-reliable reputation, either due to poor case management or communication, are not likely to get hired or may go through a second round of screening (J. Stone, personal communication, October 26, 2017). "I would be more apt to hire somebody that has a very good referral from somebody who's an upstanding individual in the community" (G. Black, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

Berg and Huebner (as cited in Ray, Grommon, & Rydberg, 2016) suggest that social networks confirm skills and credentials, assist with job attainment, and influence decision making of prisoners returning to communities. The findings on credible character references are the most important findings for this study. The results have meaning when relationships are developed and sustained between local employers willing to hire ex-offenders and varying community partners that work with ex-offender populations. Ex-offenders share the responsibility by demonstrating consistent traits over time that community partners are willing to vouch for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase partnerships between re-entry organizations, staffing agencies, and employers hiring ex-offenders. Interviewees shared personal endeavors to increase re-entry partnerships they have with staffing agencies, adult schools, libraries, work release sites, etc. The goal is to gain/increase awareness of local businesses, their needs, and potential willingness to work with ex-offending populations.
2. Commit to employer/re-entry partnering initiatives. Trusted referral systems between re-entry stakeholders and employers are sustained with objective feedback mechanisms. Professional communication regarding the referral process, applicants, and current business needs are intended to deepen and mature trust between employers and participating agencies.
3. State-appointed support for ex-offender employers. In the surveys and interviews, employers described challenging experiences which led to a negative set of circumstances for the ex-offending employee. Since the employer is able to observe behaviors potentially leading to substance abuse and possible relapse, they may be able to identify and share progressive behaviors with an established support network as challenges with the ex-offender employee unfold. This could initiate support for the employee at the onset of a time of difficulty and potentially avoid potential relapse and re-incarceration.
4. Provide employers clear descriptions of charges. Employers provided fourteen distinguishable circumstances in which they thought drug offenses were different from other offenses. Employers that hire from ex-offending populations should be given clear, generic descriptions of charges to assist with job placement for potential employees.

In conclusion, the employers and/or hiring managers in this study extend employment opportunities to ex-offenders with a framework of 'second chances' in mind, which intend successful outcomes for the customer, organization, and ex-offending employee. Hiring managers are aware that, when hiring from this population, challenges associated with criminal histories may show up, but the employee may also show a higher level of gratitude and dedication than non-ex-offending employees. Employers express slight reservation when hiring from ex-offending populations with drug-related convictions, but, encouragingly, are willing to continue in this practice. A significant finding of this study was that employers or hiring managers are somewhat likely to hire ex-offenders with drug convictions based upon referrals from a person or system they trust. Trusted referrals become a tool for employers in their screening process, which allows them to place validated ex-offender applicants in an appropriate priority list among other job applicants. Given the potential pros and

cons to hiring from this population, organizations may benefit from extending employment opportunities to ex-offenders with drug convictions. ❧

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TABLE 1: HIGHEST ARRESTS BY STATE, 2014

Delaware	Total all classes	Violent crime	Drug abuse violations	Larceny-theft	Other assaults	Property crime	2014 estimated population
Under 18	4,133	339	458	706	1,104	930	
All ages	36,780	2,126	6,163	6,780	6,826	7,963	933,379

Note. The information in this table information comes from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, Table 69 (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015).

TABLE 2: TWO AND TEN YEAR PROJECTED GROWTH IN A MID-ATLANTIC STATE, BY IDENTIFIED INDUSTRY

Industry	2015	2017	2-Year Job Change	Annual Percent Change	2014	2024	10-Year Job Change	Annual Growth Rate
Construction	20,900	21,980	1,080	2.6%	20,400	23,820	3,420	1.6%
Transportation and warehousing	15,610	16,050	440	1.4%	14,750	16,160	1,410	0.9%
Accommodation and food services	39,850	40,930	1,080	1.3%	37,100	40,550	3,450	0.9%
Administrative and waste services	25,870	26,570	700	1.3%	25,320	27,570	2,250	0.9%
Other services, except public administration	18,610	19,040	430	1.1%	18,450	19,790	1,340	0.7%
Retail trade (incl automotive)	52,560	53,460	900	0.9%	52,420	55,300	2,880	0.5%
Manufacturing	27,130	26,760	-370	-0.7%	25,660	25,140	-520	-0.2%

Note: Adapted from Sharpley, G., & Doherty, T. (2016) *Delaware 2024 Occupation and Industry Projections*. Retrieved from <https://dcrn.delawareworks.com/docs/Delaware-Occupation-and-Industry-Projections.pdf>. Copyright Delaware Department of Labor, Office of Occupational and Labor Market Information

TABLE 3: RELIABILITY FOR TRUSTWORTHY VERIFICATION

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.889	.890	3

TABLE 4: MEAN OF TRUSTWORTHY VERIFICATION

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Trustcontr	43	1.00	6.00	4.2016	1.11777

FIGURE 1: EMPLOYER HIRING RESERVATION MODEL

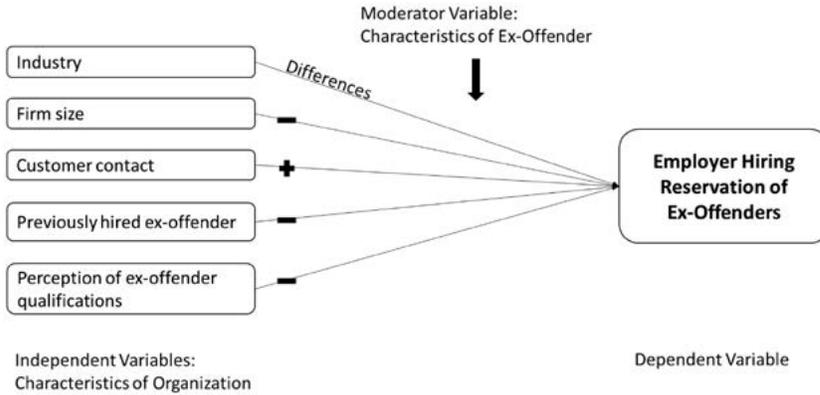
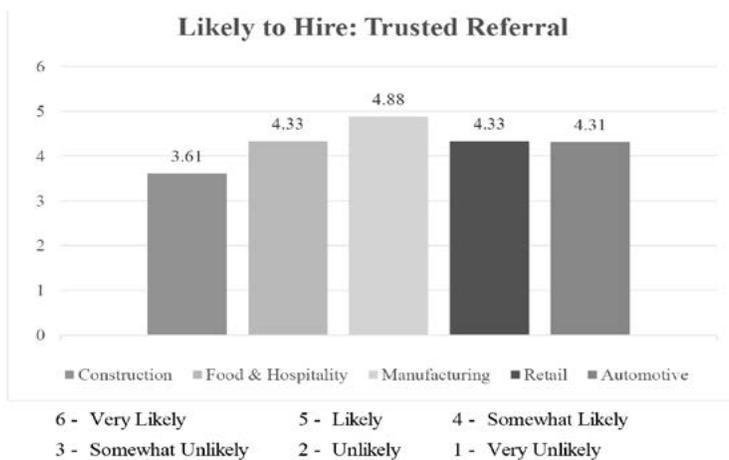


FIGURE 2: MEANS OF INDEX FOR EMPLOYER HIRING RESERVATION



FIGURE 3: DESCRIPTIVES FOR TRUST CONSTRUCT BY INDUSTRY



APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT**Greetings,**

Thank you for participating in the following survey; your feedback is important. A primary goal of the survey is to learn more about hiring ex-offenders with drug-related convictions. Previous studies have shown a greater willingness to hire ex-offenders by employers included in one the following industries: food and hospitality; retail; maintenance and janitorial; manufacturing; construction; automotive; and transportation and warehousing. If your job industry fits one of these seven categories, I would greatly appreciate your participation in a short survey on this important topic. Responding to the survey should take approximately 12 minutes; you and your answers will remain anonymous. Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer questions, stop at any time or skip questions without penalty. Your perceptions however, are valued and we sincerely hope that you will take time to help us better understand your views on this population. Thank you for your valuable time.

1. Please select the industry that best describes your organization:

- Food and Hospitality
- Retail
- Maintenance and Janitorial
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Automotive
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Other

(If respondent selects “Other,” survey skips to disqualification page with the following statement: “Thank you for starting our survey. Our primary goal is to learn more about the job categories previously mentioned and your time is valuable. This completes your participation in the survey!”)

2. Has your organization hired ex-offenders?

- Yes
- No

(If respondent selects “No,” survey skips to question #4.)

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (CONTINUED)

On a scale from least positive to most positive, please rate your organization's experience with hiring ex-offenders:

Completely negative	Mostly negative	Slightly negative	Slightly positive	Mostly positive	Completely positive
<input type="radio"/>					

3.

Please respond to the questions on background checks.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does your organization complete background checks on all applicants?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4a.

Do the results of the criminal background check provide enough specific information to make a hiring decision?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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4b.

Please rate how likely you would be to **hire ex-offenders with drug convictions** having the following conditions:

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely
Ex-offender has specific job skills appropriate to organization's industry, but does not have a GED or high school diploma.	<input type="radio"/>					

5a.

Ex-offender has earned a GED or high school diploma, but has no prior work experience.	<input type="radio"/>					
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5b.

Ex-offender has been referred to your organization by a person or validation system you trust.	<input type="radio"/>					
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5c.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (CONTINUED)

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely
5d. Ex-offender can produce documents to verify completion of a treatment or intervention program (re-entry, substance abuse, soft skills, transitional employment).	<input type="radio"/>					
5e. Colleagues told me about satisfactory experiences in hiring ex-offenders.	<input type="radio"/>					
Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below pertaining to ex-offenders with drug convictions:						
	Definitely false	Mostly false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Definitely true
6a. Upon release from prison, ex-offenders are involved in activities that will help them turn their lives around.	<input type="radio"/>					
6b. The process of hiring an ex-offender is more difficult than hiring someone without a criminal background.	<input type="radio"/>					
6c. The organization is assuming a greater risk when hiring an ex-offender as compared to a person with no criminal history.	<input type="radio"/>					

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (CONTINUED)

	Definitely false	Mostly false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Definitely true
<p>6d. In addition to the ex-offender(s) our company hired, I am familiar with at least one other person that has been involved with the criminal justice system.</p>	<input type="radio"/>					
<p>6e. Our organization would prefer to hire an applicant with no criminal history, no work experience and no GED over an ex-offender with 3 years of relevant work experience and a GED.</p>	<input type="radio"/>					
<p>6f. Our company feels more comfortable hiring an ex-offender once they have established a positive track record, at least 6 months after release.</p>	<input type="radio"/>					
<p>6g. Probation, parole and assistance of other transitional agencies serve as a meaningful support system to employers hiring ex-offenders.</p>	<input type="radio"/>					
<p>6h. Our company has a policy or process in place that supports hiring ex-offenders.</p>	<input type="radio"/>					

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (CONTINUED)

7.

Please rank the following candidates with a drug conviction your organization would consider hiring selecting the most attractive applicant as #1 and least attractive candidate as #4:

 8 years working experience & 3 years of incarceration 5 years working experience & 2 years of incarceration 2 years working experience & 1 year of incarceration 1.5 years working experience & 6 months of incarceration

How many people are currently employed at your organization?

- 5 - 15
- 16 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 399
- 400+

8.

Please select the average amount of direct contact your employees have with customers:

- No contact
- Limited contact
- Daily contact
- Constant contact

9.

Are drug-offenses different than other offenses? Please elaborate.

10.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT (CONTINUED)

What challenges has your company experienced in hiring ex-offenders?

11.

What benefits has your company experienced from hiring ex-offenders?

12.

Please share other concerns not addressed in this questionnaire:

13.

SPECIAL EDITION
PRISON LITERACY

PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE

J.U.M.P. JAIL UNDERSTANDING MATHEMATICS PROJECT

David R. Finston
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ABSTRACT

In 2017, a mathematics education intervention in the Doña Ana County Detention Center, Las Cruces, New Mexico, was begun by two retired professors of mathematics as a volunteer project. The program now provides internship and master's thesis opportunities for students in the Department of Criminal Justice at New Mexico State University. The challenges of teaching mathematics in a county jail are discussed, along with the evolution of the program to meet those challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Of the nearly 2.2 million incarcerated adults in the U.S., one third are held in county jails or detention centers. Despite the large number of jailed adults, there is scant literature on educational initiatives for these incarcerated individuals. This may be a reflection of the scarcity of such programs, as educational initiatives for what are perceived as short-term detainees may be viewed as a low priority. However, misdemeanor sentences of up to one year are typically served in such facilities, and individuals awaiting trial for a felony indictment but without access to bail can be detained even longer. Moreover, due to overcrowding at federal facilities, and as a revenue source for local governments, county jails/detention centers house an ever-increasing number of federal inmates:

The Marshals Service contracts with approximately 1,800 state and local governments to rent jail space. Eighty percent of the prisoners in Marshals Service custody are detained in state, local and private facilities... the Marshals Service provides select state and local governments with Cooperative Agreement Program (CAP) funds to improve local jail facilities and to expand jail capacities. In return, the agency receives guaranteed space for its federal prisoners. The Marshals Service has awarded \$279 million to counties and municipalities" (U.S. Marshalls Service, n.d.).

These individuals can be held for indeterminate time periods (more than 7 months for drug offenses) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). Consequently, these facilities do house significant numbers of detainees who can benefit from a well-focused and targeted educational intervention.

In contrast to jails/detention centers, the literature on correctional education in prisons is extensive; two relatively recent publications indicating the potential benefits for reentry are Irving (2016) and Steurer, Smith, and Tracy (2001). The former, a longitudinal study of 3,200 prison inmates in Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio, found that inmates who participated in education programs while incarcerated showed significantly lower rates in each standard measure of recidivism (rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration) three years after release compared to nonparticipants. Employment data shows that in each of the three post-release years in which inmates were followed, wages reported to the states' labor departments were higher for participants versus nonparticipants. The latter publication, reporting on a large-scale review by the Rand Corporation of decades' worth of literature on correctional education interventions, reveals that participation in any kind of education program, independent of the prisoner's offense, or topic and level of the intervention, reduces recidivism by up to 43%, and participants are far more likely to find employment post-release. Moreover, the Rand study concludes that every dollar invested in correctional education saves nearly five dollars in reincarceration costs over three years. In light of these findings, and the longer than expected incarceration time in jails/detention centers, it is likely that educational interventions will have positive effects in these locales.

We report on the mathematics intervention J.U.M.P. (Jail Understanding Math Project) at the Doña Ana County Detention Center (DACDC) in Las Cruces, New Mexico, initiated in Spring 2017, that has evolved into an 8-week/16-session course to prepare detainees for Adult Basic Education mathematics courses at the Doña Ana Community College. Research based on the program will constitute the Master's thesis for the second named author, and a long-term goal is to effect a pipeline to the Adult Basic Education program at the Doña Ana Community College. Our hope is to enlist the support of the Doña Ana County District Attorney, the New Mexico Office Adult Probation and Parole, and federal agencies (U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor) in the latter effort. Since a research proposal has not yet been submitted to the NMSU Institutional Research Board, this report can only discuss the project in general terms. The authors thank Maria Ethier, Adult Education Director, Doña Ana Community College, for her support and encouragement and her suggestion to write this paper.

HISTORY

From March 2017 through February 2018, Emeritus Mathematics Professors Dr. Joan Staniswalis (University of Texas at El Paso) and Dr. David Finston (New Mexico State University) conducted a volunteer mathematics tutoring project to adult detainees at DACDC. Their initial goal had been to prepare detainees for the GED® but, for several reasons, this soon proved to be unrealistic. The transient nature of jail incarceration, the large disparity in detainees' mathematical backgrounds, detoxing in class, and the absence of a suitable classroom for female detainees rendered problematic both traditional teaching methods and the preparation of a sequence of lesson plans leading to GED® readiness. Moreover, since 2014 the GED® has been strictly computer-based and, at present, there is no capacity at the DACDC for computer use by detainees; no possibility for realistic GED® and computer literacy training exist at the present time. For most sessions, topics in mathematics relevant to the GED® were presented in "bite size" presentations, with the occasional presentation of a topic in mathematics that applies to daily life (e.g. the design of error detecting ID numbers, the notion of false positives and false negatives in disease diagnosis and drug testing). This format, while engaging the detainees' intelligence, limited the ability to teach them less familiar GED® topics like statistics or geometry and to address mathematical literacy with word problems. Dr. Staniswalis's fluency in Spanish enabled the project to serve a wide variety of detainees (men, women, and the significant Spanish-only population).

Men and women expressed radically different attitudes toward the tutoring sessions. Men tended to engage in the lecture format and stay on task when asked to work problems as individuals or in small groups. Women tended to lose interest during lectures and become discouraged during problem sessions.

Consequently, for the women, lectures were all but abandoned, replaced by a smorgasbord of worksheets on various topics from which they could choose. The women would cluster in groups of two or three, with Drs. Staniswalis and Finston floating among them to offer guidance. While this kept more women engaged, it was not conducive to establishing a body of knowledge leading to measurable outcomes. The observed gender disparity in learning styles demands systematic study and pedagogical methods to more fully engage women detainees. Many women detainees gave as a motivation for attending our classes the desire to help their children with homework. This task will most likely fall on them after their release, and can be a crucial step in stemming the intergenerational cycle of poor academic performance.

After one year, the project was suspended due to Dr. Staniswalis's sudden fatal illness. In Summer 2018, Ms. Ruiz, a native Spanish speaker, interpreter for attorneys in Federal Court, and newly admitted Master's student in Criminal Justice at NMSU, joined the renewed project, dubbed J.U.M.P., in a credit-bearing internship capacity. Because her training is not in mathematics, it was necessary to prepare focused and detailed teaching materials, which Ms. Ruiz translated into Spanish. The choice was made to create a 6 week/12 session program (during August-October 2018) beginning at a very basic level (definitions of number systems), continuing through algebra of rational numbers (i.e. fractions), and culminating in applications of decimals and percents. Materials on linear equations and their applications were prepared in case progress exceeded our expectations (it did not).

Ms. Ruiz and Dr. Finston team-taught one class each of adult men and women, meeting twice per week with each group in 60-90 minute sessions. Each group initially began with 14 detainees, and 8 in each group maintained regular attendance (some were discharged or transferred and some stopped attending). Pre-testing, using a pre-placement instrument in English from CTB McGraw-Hill, was inconclusive for the men, due probably to language issues. They were exclusively federal detainees, most of them Mexican nationals, with several Spanish-only speakers. A number of them did have excellent mathematics skills, but literacy issues interfered with their ability to solve word problems. The women were all English speakers, and testing indicated that our choice of mathematical level was correct for them. Each class began with a mathematical puzzle selected for its potential to develop some aspect of mathematical literacy, then a lecture, and drill work on the technical content of the lecture. Homework was distributed, collected at the following session, and graded.

Contrary to our previous experience, the women were fully engaged in the class activities and initiated study groups in their dayrooms. Most striking was the increasingly positive attitude the women exhibited toward the class. It was as if the program gave them the opportunity to feel smart for the first time in their lives.

MS. RUIZ FLIES SOLO

Because of circumstances explained below, Ms. Ruiz taught a second session of the course alone, exclusively to women, from October–December 2018, using the same materials as in the first session, albeit with minor edits. Pre- and post-tests designed specifically to assess prior knowledge of the course curriculum, and to gauge mathematical literacy, were administered. A survey to assess attitudes toward mathematics and educational attainment of the detainees and their parents was also developed and administered at the first class meeting.

An initial cohort of 12 attended, with 8 maintaining regular attendance throughout the 6 weeks. On the pretest, fewer than half of the 30 questions were attempted, indicating once again that the content and level of the materials are appropriate. Post-testing was very telling in that, although the numerical scores were not impressive (scores ranged from 35% to 80%), most problems were attempted. The importance of the post-test is therefore as a measure of enhanced confidence, i.e. as quantitative evidence of the perceived improvement in attitude noted in the prior session. Of the 10 detainees who completed the Attitude Survey (2 entered the

class at the second meeting), 3 had graduated from high school (2 had taken some college courses) and one had completed only the 8th grade. For 6 of the detainees, neither parent had graduated from high school (one father was reported to have been largely absent, one had no education, and educational attainment for another was unknown). Of the other 4, all the mothers graduated from high school but none had any college. Two of the fathers had graduated from high school, and one had graduated from college.

Mathematical attitudes were not overly negative; however, performance on the pre-test indicated very low skill levels (only one detainee scored higher than 50% and, as noted above, on many of the tests, few questions were even attempted). The previous team-taught course was conducted in as non-threatening and welcoming manner as possible; both male and female detainees enjoyed the interactions. However, the increase in confidence exhibited by the women was more profound in Ms. Ruiz's solo class. Her method to learn their names set a positive tone of mutual respect. She handed them all a half sheet of colored paper, had them write their name on it, and fold it in half again for use as a stand. Women were encouraged to decorate the name stand, and responded artistically (ex: flowers, lines, hearts, calligraphy). In time, the detainees volunteered their personal stories and paths to detention. They accepted responsibility for their bad choices and expressed remorse for the hardship caused to their parents and children. Their level of comfort with the class led some to seek information about their particular cases, none of which were addressed, as they could not and should not have been.

Ms. Ruiz insisted that each detainee present work at the whiteboard. Initially resistant, by the end of the 6-week course, all 8 detainees performed this task with self-assurance, often cheered on in Spanish by the others. Recognizing that efforts to gain the women's trust distract from the time devoted to instruction, but also that such trust is an important contributor to increased confidence in mathematics, a decision was made to move to an 8 week/16 session format for future courses.

The rapport established between the detainees and Ms. Ruiz enabled her to observe manifestations of certain theories of criminal behavior, in particular Strain Theory (Agnew, 2001), Social Disorganization Theory (Sampson & Groves, 1989), and Labeling Theory (Bachman & Paternoster, 2017).

According to Agnew (2001), Strain Theory encompasses the view that strains or stressors induce negative emotions, creating pressure for corrective action, of which crime is one possible response. Crime may be used to reduce or escape from strain, seek revenge against the source of strain and related targets, or alleviate negative emotions. Typical of the DACDC female population are individuals experiencing chronic unemployment who may engage in criminal behaviors like theft or dealing drugs in order to obtain money or seek revenge against perceived enemies. They may also use drugs as a palliative measure.

As discussed by Sampson and Groves (1989/1994), Social Disorganization Theory states that lives characterized by inconsistency, conflict, and disorganization predict criminal behavior. Additionally, the theory also posits that such phenomena are triggered by weakened social integration of neighborhoods and the absence of self-regulatory mechanisms. In Doña Ana County, disorganization reflects low levels of social control generated by socioeconomic disadvantage, residential turnover, and population heterogeneity (largely Hispanic, both long term residents and recent immigrants, and white), i.e. the convergence of conflicting cultural standards in poor neighborhoods and the emergence of group behavior linked to criminality (e.g. gangs). The large geographical region over which the county's population is dispersed, and the weak economic base, limit opportunities for social integration, even in Las Cruces, the relatively urban center and county seat.

Labeling Theory is a social reaction theory which focuses on the consequences of an individual's criminal experiences as a result of reactions to their actions by their social group, the criminal justice system, and society at large (Bachman & Paternoster, 2017). For example, labelling by the social group as a bad parent, by the criminal justice system as a danger to society requiring incarceration, and by society at large as a threat, all result in a loss of self-worth. Internalizing the label can then result in a spiral of greater involvement in crime and deviance. The positive response to J.U.M.P. by female detainees is an indicator that for this level

of offender, correctional educational interventions have the potential to counter negative self-perceptions induced by labelling.

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

The DACDC requires a formal application procedure for volunteers, including a background check, names of references, and an interview with a detective. An approved applicant is then given the all-day training for all staff of the Detention Center on their procedures, rules, and regulations, classification of inmates, compartment, and interactions with staff and inmates, followed by a tour of the facility. Upon completion, volunteers sign a statement acknowledging understanding of the Detention Center's regulations. Dr. Finston's application, in 2016, was initially rejected because of adolescent and very young adult drug use (40 years before) admitted to in the interview, but an appeal to the Detention Center Director was successful. A close friend of Dr. Finston was convicted of a misdemeanor and sentenced to the DACDC for one year beginning in the summer of 2018. During the August–October course, Dr. Finston inadvertently violated one of the DACDC rules by performing a service for his friend, and was barred from teaching there. Fortunately, this occurred after the course had ended.

In addition, the Detention Center Director was removed in 2016 for purchasing marijuana from an undercover police officer. The Detention Center has been run by two interim directors since that time while a search for a permanent director remains underway.

The DACDC has the capacity for approximately 850 detainees, classified as low, medium, or high security. Approximately one sixth of detainees are female and, by agreement with the U.S. Marshals Service, up to 270 Federal detainees (250 male, 20 female) can be detained there. Recruitment for the mathematics class is conducted by the DACDC social workers. They inform detainees in low or medium security dayrooms (housing units accommodating 30-35 detainees) of the availability of the mathematics class, and explain the ground rules for behavior and expectations for attendance. With few exceptions, all who express interest are allowed to participate. The social workers are extremely accommodating and appreciative of the work. Because of the dearth of educational opportunities at DACDC, they frequently request more sections and varied offerings (e.g. reading).

The DACDC has two classrooms, one used exclusively for male inmates and another for classes and meetings (ex. religion, parenting, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous) with men and women separately. The latter room is equipped with leg shackles for high security inmates. Because the mathematics program treated only low and medium security inmates, only the former classroom was used for men. This space would be of adequate size for 20 students if furnished efficiently. It is equipped with a whiteboard, folding tables, and plastic chairs, and can accommodate 12-15 students. The classroom in which the women are taught is smaller and similarly furnished, but parts of it are used for storage and the whiteboard is very small. Because each user of the room has a preferred configuration, the instructor must devote time to arranging the furniture. Neither room is maintained to a high degree of cleanliness. The classrooms are located in the secure area of the detention center, so access requires a metal detector scan of each individual and a scan of all materials brought inside. Only paper is allowed to be distributed to inmates. Any other teaching material for use by volunteers requires prior written authorization from an administrator. No writing implement or fastener is allowed in; whiteboard markers are provided by the detention center, and inmates are allowed to use only the flex pens issued to them. Inmates are given folders at the first class meeting and written mathematics materials are distributed as they arise in lectures.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Compared to prisons, the jail/detention center environment presents an extended set of challenges to educational interventions. Because of the local nature of these facilities, the challenges and methods to meet

them must reflect the community's demographics and economic base. For instance, it would be impossible to implement at the DACDC the admirable work done in the Kenton County Detention Center in Kentucky (Quinones, 2017). There, a dayroom is designated for GED® preparation. Detainees apply for admission and are required to maintain standards for participation and behavior. The facility is equipped with 5 computers for testing and one with internet access for pre-tests. Jaimie Crouch, who conducts GED® education in the Kenton County Detention center, informed Dr. Finston via email in June 2017 that since the program's inception 8 detainees had passed all of the GED® exams except the mathematics exam, lending another anecdote to support the common belief that mathematics is the most serious obstacle to GED® success.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2017 Doña Ana County has a population of 215,579 with a Median Household Income of \$39,114, and Poverty Rate of 26.3%. The New Mexico Department of Health reports for Doña Ana County the November 2017 poverty rate of 37.5% for children under 18, and the percentage of the population on Medicaid of 48.8%. New Mexico ranks at or near the bottom on every national measure of child health and educational attainment on various NAEP measures (Nation's Report Card). The major employment sectors have transitioned from agriculture and military support services to educational services, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade. These sectors demand mathematical literacy at some level and therefore drive the long term goals of the project, i.e. toward:

- Making available for nationwide dissemination a self-contained set of teaching materials guiding jail inmates through all of the mathematics relevant to the GED® along with supplementary materials demonstrating applications of said mathematics to real life. Such materials should be usable by anyone with a high school teaching credential.
- Designing pedagogical methodology to engage female inmates, drawing upon research conducted by New Mexico State University (NMSU) Criminal Justice faculty and graduate students.
- The establishment within DACDC of teaching facilities conducive to GED® preparation, i.e. a redesign of the classroom used by women inmates and the purchase of a bank of laptop computers.
- In collaboration with the Doña Ana Community College (DACC) program in Adult Basic Education, the Department of Criminal Justice at NMSU, and the New Mexico Corrections Department Office of Probation and Parole, a pipeline feeding 25-50 released inmates per year to the DACC for completion of the GED®, vocational training, or further academic preparation.
- An ongoing mentoring program staffed by NMSU faculty, undergraduate, and graduate students to guide inmates through the pipeline and provide them with academic support at DACC. These activities will require external support, to be sought from the U.S. Department of Justice (Second Chance Act Comprehensive Community Based Reentry Programs), the U.S. Department of Labor (Reentry Projects), and from private foundations. ☞

David Finston earned his doctorate in mathematics at the University of California, San Diego. He held tenured positions at Virginia Commonwealth University, New Mexico State University, and Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, serving as Department Head and Chair of the latter two institutions. He conducted research and directed Masters and Doctoral theses in algebra and affine algebraic geometry, with support from the National Science Foundation and National Security Agency, and conducted various mathematics education activities with support from the NSF and U.S. Department of Education.

Julia Ruiz was born in Mexico, immigrated to the U.S. with her parents as a child and was raised in a Spanish-speaking household, learning English on her own in the U.S. She graduated high school as an unwed mother and attended community college, returning to earn her bachelor's degree after raising her two girls. She is currently enrolled in the Criminal Justice Graduate Program at New Mexico State University.

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PATHWAY TO SUCCESS: CREATING INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER PATHWAYS FOR INMATES AND REENTRANTS

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ABSTRACT

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) has implemented a 60-hour “Pathway to Success” course for inmates who wish to enroll in vocational coursework. The purpose of this course is two-fold: to ensure that PADOC inmates are enrolling in vocational courses for which they have both the aptitude and the interest to excel, and to better prepare inmates for workplace success upon release.

Course design took into account several unique factors, including creation of a career plan unique to each inmate; limited availability of technology in a secure institution setting; and consideration of the realities of employment for those with criminal records while at the same time encouraging this population to pursue career goals. The 60-hour curriculum was designed to present units and lessons that scaffold, so that each lesson builds upon what was learned in the previous lesson. Units also include regional information, including local labor market information and workforce development system “one-stop” services. All lessons are aligned to the Pennsylvania Department of Education K-12 Standards, the College and Career Readiness Standards, and Pennsylvania’s Foundation Skills Framework.

BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) incarcerates approximately 48,500 individuals in Pennsylvania who have been sentenced to two or more years in prison. The average inmate is 39, male, and has an 8th grade reading level. 82.6% of male inmates are unskilled or possess no skills, and 27.1% have less than a 12th grade education. While 95% of inmates will be released back to society, over 60% will return to prison at some point.

PADOC has long been aware that programming to increase job readiness leads to better inmate outcomes. As part of these efforts, PADOC is spearheading an effort to build a career pathways framework “inside the walls” that prepares inmates with in-demand skills while incarcerated, and that connects those individuals to jobs, support services, and ongoing education upon release. This work is funded by a FY15 Improving Reentry Education grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

All state correctional institutions (SCIs) house education facilities that offer academic and vocational programs, including secondary diploma and high school equivalency preparation programs. Education programming is staffed by a principal, academic guidance counselor, and instructors who report to the Director

of the Bureau of Correction Education (BCE). BCE is responsible for the oversight of all PADOC academic and vocational programming, institutional libraries, and barber/cosmetology schools. Previously part of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, BCE was brought under PADOC in 1998, but remains a separate line item in the state budget. The majority of the Bureau's funding comes from state allocated monies, but a small portion of federal grant funding is also present.

BCE has been an integral piece of creating a career pathways framework within the SCIs, especially in ensuring that PADOC offers inmates relevant vocational courses. As PADOC began examining the vocational courses offered, instructors repeatedly expressed that it was important to get the "right person in the right seat." Staff cuts over the years had eliminated the vocational guidance counselor position; thus, it falls to one academic guidance counselor to provide career advice and appropriate education placement for 1500–2500 inmates per institution.

Previously, there was little vetting before enrolling an inmate in the vocational course of his or her choice. The inmate's TABE score was considered by the counselor prior to placement, as well as any high school credential earned. Institutions provided the pre-vocational, or "pre-voc," class to those inmates that were interested in enrolling in a vocational program but did not have their high school diploma or equivalency. The course was designed to be an introduction to the vocational setting and what would be expected when applying for jobs. Students did put together a working resume, but it was never updated, nor was it saved for future use. The course also lacked the teaching of soft skills to the inmates. At no point was aptitude or interest in the desired vocation taken into account.

The need to update the pre-voc class dovetailed with the need to create a solution to have the "right people in the right seats" for vocational programs. PADOC brought together current pre-voc instructors for two separate day-long focus groups to discuss what was working with the current curriculum and what updates were needed. Overwhelmingly, instructors stated that students needed a "reality check," and that they had unrealistic expectations of the types of jobs (and wages) they would be able to obtain with their current education level. Instructors also expressed the need to keep modules on mock interviews and resume development.

Based on these discussions, PADOC made the decision to replace the existing pre-voc course with the "Pathway to Success" course that would be required for all inmates who wished to enroll in a vocational course. A scope of work was created to procure a curriculum that would be based both on the topics identified by BCE staff as vital to providing a basic overview of job-readiness, as well as topics that would guide inmates in selecting the appropriate vocational path. Central to the curriculum would be a career pathways approach, emphasizing the skills and credentials needed to enter and advance in specific jobs and careers. The curriculum had to allow the BCE instructor to assist the inmate in considering his or her skills and interests, jobs not available to those with a criminal record, labor market information from the area where the inmate would be likely to reenter, available opportunities within the SCIs (such as available education programs and inmate work detail opportunities), and opportunities after reentry.

Employability skills, or "soft skills," had to be built into each of the modules. Common employability skills include personal initiative, communication, dependability, scheduling and time management, getting along with supervisors and co-workers, resolving conflict, giving and receiving feedback, stress on the job, and diversity in the workplace.

COURSE DESIGN

The 60-hour Pathway to Success curriculum consists of 11 units. Resources for instructors include lesson plans, all required supporting materials, and supplemental ideas for extended learning. The units and lessons scaffold so that each builds upon what was previously presented. This strategy enables students to finish the

course with a clear understanding of work opportunities that are available to them, an action plan that lays out concrete steps to be followed in order to achieve short-term and long-term goals, and knowledge about and practice in key employability skills needed to get and keep a job. Ultimately, this new curriculum functions as a career planning activity that results in a practical understanding of how to identify a realistic and achievable short-term and long-term career goal for a career pathway and steps for advancing that plan.

The curriculum was designed using a variety of resources, including information from PADO, PADO partners, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, and Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Adult Education. Lessons and associated resources are written at a seventh grade or lower reading level.

To achieve the goal of identifying a career pathway, a target occupation, and skills that support the individual in successfully moving toward their target goal, each of the 11 units results in a product that ultimately provides students with a comprehensive plan that identifies a career pathway and a plan to achieve their goal. Lessons offer individuals the opportunity to explore occupations that align with their skills, abilities, interests, experience, and suitability for employment. In addition, students consider resources that expose them to tools, such as O*NET, that address the practical aspect of choosing a target occupation.

Participating students learn about local labor market information, including Pennsylvania's High Priority Occupations, job outlooks, associated skills, and earnings outlooks. They have the opportunity to contextualize their outlook for a target community in order to ensure a realistic understanding of their goal and how to achieve this goal. Skills, training, and educational needs are assessed to help students define their goal and create a career plan to achieve this goal. Other considerations are also included in the career planning, such as budgeting, to evaluate individuals' day-to-day financial needs and plan for items such as enrolling in educational or skills training.

While developing their individual career pathways, each student researches and documents, through portfolio products, the following:

- Module 1: Completed O*Net Interest Profiler and 3-5 jobs within the student's Job Zones
- Module 2: Review of previously identified jobs to identify any barriers imposed by the student's criminal record
- Module 3: Use of county-level labor market information to determine if previously identified jobs are in-demand, and to determine average wage. Creation of a personal budget based on the average wage
- Module 4: Use of O*NET job profiles to explore wages, job outlooks, and demand; inventory of personal strengths and areas of improvement needed for the identified jobs
- Module 5: List of inmate jobs within SCI that may provide the student with relevant work experience to meet his or her goals
- Module 6: Creation of SMART goals to follow a Career Pathway for the student's goal job(s)
- Module 7: Information on the PA CareerLink (Pennsylvania's name for American Job Centers, or "one-stops") resources and services
- Module 8: Cover Letter and Resume
- Module 9: Mock Interview information, including how to address conviction questions, resulting in an Interview Script
- Module 10: Parole Hearing script that reflects positive language, behaviors, and discusses skills learned while incarcerated
- Module 11: Final Career Pathway Plan

Additionally, the classes include a focus on employability skills, or "soft skills," using the Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Adult Education's "Foundations Skills Framework." The Framework is a resource guide designed in conjunction with employer and educator input that identifies key employability and lifelong learning skills. Students use this information to assess their current skill levels in areas such as clear

communication, responding to feedback, thinking critically, and decision-making. Students are also able to create a plan to improve specific skills that are needed for their target occupations, and to chart their progress.

All students who complete the 60-hour curriculum exit the course with a portfolio that the student can take with him or her to assist in future career planning and job search activities. This portfolio consists of key items that both remind the individual of why and how they have chosen a target occupation and the pathway that will lead them to that occupation. The portfolio also provides potential tools that the student can use to plan future career goals should the goal that was identified in the course change. This portfolio provides a communications tool to maintain continuity among PADOE staff as inmates advance through educational and vocational programming. PADOE staff can easily access information that the individual has identified as aspects of his or her career plan. Examples include target occupation, key skills needed for that occupation, assessment of the individual's interests and skills and how these align to the target occupation, goal development, and training or educational needs.

Upon completion of the curriculum, six SCIs were selected to pilot the program. A comprehensive training, developed and delivered by the authors of the curriculum, was offered to teachers and appropriate staff from the six SCIs. The training consisted of an overview of each unit followed by modeling the lessons. This strategy was selected so that teachers could sense the activities from the perspective of the students. It also allowed for first-hand experience with all of the curricular resources and established an opportunity for real time feedback. All pilot SCIs were provided technical assistance throughout the implementation of the Pathway to Success curriculum. Included in the technical assistance were site visits and conference calls with the training providers and curriculum authors. Other than administrative revisions, implementing teachers requested a student survey of the course to provide feedback to the teachers so that they could revise delivery methods, if appropriate.

RESULTS TO DATE

Initially, some staff were reluctant to implement the change in curriculum. This new curriculum required hours of direct interaction with the students and teacher-led discussions. Many felt there would be too much prep work involved and that they would not be able to cover all modules in the allotted 60 hours.

Through staff training and guidance from PADOE Central Office staff, the pilot SCIs began offering the course and staff began to understand the flow of the modules, especially the importance of completing them sequentially. Many staff are now excited about providing the O*NET Interest Profiler and showing the inmates what jobs are available in their areas and providing hope for those getting ready to return to society. Staff have taken an active role in assisting the inmates with preparing their working resumes and ensuring that resumes are saved and passed along to the reentry specialists at the SCIs. This allows work history and schooling information to be continually updated and provides the inmate with a true "working" resume to present to potential employers upon release.

Inmates report that they have learned a great deal and feel more confident in applying for positions prior to release. Below are quotes pulled from inmate surveys of the course:

"At first I just chose the highest paying job that sounded good. Then as the class went on, I found jobs that I can see myself working and making a career out of. The more information that I was given in this class, the more it started to open my eyes and mind to wanting to know more about a job that I am now focusing on." – SCI Camp Hill Inmate

"Because of (this class), I can do better than just wash dishes." –SCI Cambridge Springs Inmate

"This class opened my eyes and gave me direction, skills, and budgeting plans that I didn't have before. There is no excuse for me to live illegally. I know I can contribute and earn an honest living in

society.” –SCI Mahanoy Inmate

“I have worked construction 25 years but never had a resume. After writing my first resume in this class, I sent six (resumes) out and got two job inquiries back.” –SCI Mercer Inmate

“The career I wanted to do was just an idea. Now it’s an actual realistic goal. I know more now about my career path than I did before this class.” –SCI Rockview Inmate

“The things I learned in the class taught me how to maximize my potential, how much I could make, and what’s actually attainable for someone in my position.” –SCI Houtzdale

The Pathway to Success course is now being offered at each of the 25 SCIs. Since inception in Summer 2017, 3,666 inmates have been enrolled and 2,260 have completed, a 61.6% completion rate. Next steps for evaluation include determining job placement rate for inmates who took the course, attended a vocational course, and subsequently re-entered the community.⌘

Note: The content of the Pathway to Success course was developed using a grant from the United States Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

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Kelly Martini is the Executive Policy & Grants Specialist for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Kelly has been in Pennsylvania municipal and state government for 13 years, and previously worked for 8 years at the Department of Labor & Industry in workforce development. She holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Penn State University and degrees in Professional Writing and History from York College of Pennsylvania.

Terri Fazio is the current Director for the Bureau of Correction Education. Terri has worked within the Bureau for 28 years. She began her career at SCI Waymart as an Adult Basic Education (ABE) teacher. She also worked as the evening Education Guidance Counselor and was eventually promoted to Principal. In 2014, she was promoted to Western Region Division Chief for the Bureau and then became Director in 2016.

Dorenda Hamarlund is the PADOE Career Pathways Program Manager. As such, she manages implementation of a career pathways framework within state correctional institutions. Dorenda joined the PADOE in February 2017 after 17 years with the California Department of Corrections. Dorenda has extensive experience in implementing training and certifications for inmates and working with outside organizations and companies to increase employability skills within Corrections.

TRAINING PARISHIONERS TO MINISTER MORE EFFECTIVELY TO EX-OFFENDERS

Rosie Spann-Johnson
Campbell County Public Schools

The content of this chapter describes the training provided to parishioners of Spring Hill Baptist Church to help them minister to ex-offenders. The objective was to expose parishioners to training from facilitators who were experts in their fields. The facilitators were to share their knowledge and experience.

The facilitators were:

- Dr. Carl Hutcherson, Pastor of South Lynchburg Baptist Church located in Lynchburg, Virginia, who taught a session entitled “To Equip, Educate and Empower Ex-offenders;”
- Dr. Eloise Rogers, a retired educator, who taught a class called “Conflict Resolution, Anger Management;”
- Major William Parker from the Amherst Blue Ridge Regional Jail (BRRJ) located in Amherst, VA., who conducted a session called “How Do We Stop Recidivism?;”
- Treney Tweedy, Goodwill Coordinator for Area Seven, Lynchburg, who presented a training called “Dress Less for Success;”
- Eugene Tweedy, Re-entry Facilitator, BRRJ, who conducted a session titled “Manhood;”
- Pastor Michael Turner, Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Staunton, VA, who conducted a session called “Understanding the Mindset of Ex-Offenders.”

Each session was held at Spring Hill Baptist Church. Dr. Hutcherson talked about the importance of empowering ex-offenders: “Many ex-offenders do not know where to go to receive help in finding a job or a place to live. Many homeless people are sleeping under bridges. We must realize that many ex-offenders have walls built around them.” The researcher concurs that these walls can hinder people from coming to the Church and to Christ. Although ex-offenders have paid their debt to society, the church, employers, and the community continue to force the ex-offender to pay. These hindrances include not hiring felons and the denying of restoration of rights. Some of these individuals are hopeless if they do not know what resources are available.

Some places will hire ex-offenders. One parishioner stated that Walmart would hire ex-felons on a case-by-case situation. The City of Lynchburg hires ex-felons for Public Work positions. Some ex-offenders choose to obtain their Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) to drive eighteen-wheelers and to escape from their city or community. Virginia Cares, a program located in Lynchburg, has partnerships with businesses and Goodwill Industries to hire ex-felons. These individuals need an advocate to help them navigate through the process. Sometimes ex-offenders are overwhelmed with numerous decision-making situations upon release. One way to re-introduce them into society is the restoration of rights. Dr. Hutcherson explained,

If you have lost the right to vote as a result of a felony conviction in a Virginia court or a U.S. District court, you must have your rights restored to qualify for voter registration. The restoration of rights restores the rights to vote, to run for and hold public office, to serve on juries, and to serve as a notary public. Persons who have been convicted of a violent crime, a crime against a minor, or an election law

offense must submit an application to request their rights be restored. Persons with any other felony convictions are automatically eligible for restoration of rights if they meet the criteria.

Dr. Hutcherson talked about President Barack Obama commuting the sentences of forty-six drug offenders. One of the men was from Lynchburg, Virginia. He has a job and is happy about being given a second chance. President Obama said that the men and women were not “hardened criminals”, and their punishments did not match the crimes they committed. This was part of President Obama’s plan to reform the criminal justice system by reviewing sentencing laws and reducing punishments for non-violent crimes. Obama stated, “I believe that at its heart, America is a nation of second chances, and I believe these folks deserve their second chance.”

Conflict Resolution was facilitated by Dr. Eloise Rogers. Dr. Rogers stated,

The 2010 Bureau of Justice reported that there were 1.6 million [men] incarcerated in prison and jail. In 2015, the Bureau of Justice said that there are 2.3 million men that are incarcerated. The recidivism rate is increasing at a rapid rate. It costs fifty-seven to sixty-five billion dollars annually to provide for individuals who are incarcerated. Money is being reduced from other programs to pay for the rising expense of housing an inmate. The prison system consists mainly of men in their thirties and forties, nearly 39%. The population of women who are incarcerated is increasing. However, women make up 14% of the incarcerated, 12% are Black and 83% are White women. The crimes that women are committing are violent crimes, which include sexual assault against men and women. When these women were interviewed, it was revealed that a lot of them had been abused physically, emotionally, mentally, and sexually.

Dr. Rogers said that conflict is defined as a disagreement, clash, or discord of feelings, actions, ideas, beliefs, or interest that comes due to opposing demands involving at least two people. Conflict is a part of life. There are three types of conflict: personal, instrumental, and interest. Personal conflict pertains to self-image, loyalty, breach of confidence, betrayal, and lack of respect. In order to resolve or avoid conflict with ex-offenders, one must uphold confidentiality and etiquette of being trustworthy. Dr. Rogers said,

It takes a lot for these individuals to open up and share their fears and feelings to you, and the last thing he/she needs is for an individual to demonstrate a breach of confidence, especially church folks. Many ex-offenders feel more comfortable revealing themselves to other ex-offenders. The ex-offenders have shown themselves to be a person of his word.

Instrumental conflict is when goals and procedures are different. One needs to respect people’s differences. Difference does not mean right or wrong, it only means different. The third type of conflict is interest conflict, which involves money, time, honesty, and mistakes. Many ex-offenders have made mistakes due to emotional triggers or lack of maturity. Dr. Rogers explained:

When these individuals are released from prison/jail, many of them have matured and have found Jesus while incarcerated. Therefore, it is important that parishioners do not offend or embarrass these individuals. Many of them continue to punish themselves for past mistakes.

Men display signs of aggression:

Some of the men/women know they are approaching the point that they may offend again. Many of them will refuse to get help and eventually return to prison/jail. In order to reduce recidivism, returning to prison after you’ve been released for the same offense, parishioners must be able to recognize some of the internal conflicts these individuals experience.

Many ex-offenders are angry, and they do not know why. The only relief many of them know is through

violence and hatred toward society and others.

The hardest task parishioners will face in ministering to ex-offenders is the art of “active listening”. Active listening is required. An individual must be quiet and listen with his ears and not his mouth. Some ex-offenders do not want advice, nor do they want you to fix their problems. “They do not want your opinion, just listen! Ex-offenders are recovering people. It is not our job to cure them.”

There are four ways to resolve conflicts: accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. Accommodation means the other person wins. In order to minister to ex-offenders, it would not be beneficial to accommodate them. Sometimes accommodating will cause an individual to become manipulative. Competition means winning regardless of what it takes. Compromise is when everyone gives up something. Sometimes an individual may be asked to give up something he/she values the most. However, the ultimate goal is to form collaboration. Collaboration means being in agreement, and it requires trust from both parties.

Major William Parker conducted the third session, “How to Reduce Recidivism?” Major Parker began by explaining the transformation of the jail system from the sixties until the twenty-first century:

In the old days, jails were a horrible nightmare for inmates. Inmates were placed in horrible living conditions. They were given little food and water. This was done to scare them from returning to jail. However, some inmates would become institutionalized and suffer from what I would consider PTSS (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome). A majority of inmates will not remain in jail. Most of them will get out and return to our community. It will benefit the jail/prison and other support programs to help them become better citizens.

Major Parker gave the parishioners a different perspective of the jail system. He said that the jail has become a saving grace for sixty percent of the inmates, and twenty percent of them have stated that jail has saved their lives:

If a person has a drug/alcohol addiction, many of these inmates can become delivered if they are given a longer sentence. If they stay in jail longer, then their body can heal from drugs, alcohol, and smoking. I know it may sound harsh, but in jail, they cannot smoke or drink, and there are programs available inside my jail to assist these individuals to break addictions. Therefore, in my opinion, jail can be a good opportunity for some who would probably have been dead on the streets.

Major Parker also explained that overcoming addiction is a day-by-day process. An addiction is beyond a person’s control, and the individual may need professional or spiritual counseling in order to fight the addiction. “Jail is like a substance abuse program, you can’t get away from it.” Major Parker stated,

The rise of recidivism can be contributed to these factors:

- Lack of socialization, when the individual circle of influence is no good.
- Lack of job training, I have to have my wants as well as my needs and due to incarceration, many [former inmates] struggle to obtain employment.

Many of the inmates go for a job interview, and they have earrings and visible tattoos, which disqualifies many of them from being employed. Some of the inmates have an anti-social attitude. They hate anything with a badge or that resembles authority. If these individuals do not change their attitude, then their rate of recidivism is much higher than others. It is all about attitude in my jail. Some of them have a lack of support and do not receive visits because they have burnt their bridges.

Corrections need to take the role of a parent by providing a reward and correction system. I was sixteen years old and I had a friend who was eighteen years old. I looked up to him and considered him as a mentor. My father had not been in my life since the age of twelve. I broke into a store and ended

in jail. Since I was sixteen, I was released and given the opportunity to turn my life around. Given the right circumstances, anyone could be in jail.

“How to Dress Less for Success” was facilitated by Treney Tweedy, Director of Area Seven, and Region 2000 of Goodwill Industries. She works with individuals to assist them in getting a job. Individuals are placed with case managers to help them develop and enhance the skills they need to be successful in the job market. Goodwill Industries is designed to prepare individuals for career jobs with benefits. She stated,

We must teach people for job readiness. We must teach people how to go to work. That includes teaching them to be on time. If the job requires uniform attire, then the individual must realize he/she cannot come to work with jeans or a pair of pajamas. We must change the mindset of individuals.

One of the issues that many ex-offenders experience is basic skills deficiency. They lack reading skills. However, Goodwill Industries has programs to improve reading and comprehension skills. Goodwill Industries also provides paid training for specific jobs, such as plumbing, welding, or construction, and they will pay an individual to receive an associate degree. Some of the reasons why ex-offenders are fired are absenteeism, being late, and the number one reason: the use of a cell phone while at work. Ms. Tweedy explained,

These individuals are operating with childlike mindsets. Employers are looking for people who will show up and follow instructions. Employers will train them and teach them what they want them to do. These are common work skills. Most underemployed people go from service jobs to service jobs. If a job doesn't provide retirement opportunity and a minimum of ten dollars per hour then the individual will remain underemployed. Individuals must be willing to learn more and re-train and re-tool [themselves].

Ms. Tweedy also shared with the parishioners that one way to minister to ex-offenders is to encourage them to write down their goals:

Write down and articulate your goals. Develop an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for yourself for the workforce. Be positive and do what you have to do to be a 'swimmer and not a drowner'. Be willing to take on more duties and responsibilities.

Eugene Tweedy, Director of Tweedy Mentoring Service, facilitated the lesson on “Manhood”. Mr. Tweedy explained to us that many of these ex-offender's conditions are not solely caused by their environment. He began to talk about the eight stages of the life cycle.

Trust versus mistrust starts from birth to eighteen months old. This is where a child begins to sense warmth and other sensations, whether it is good or bad.

Stage two, autonomy versus shame and doubt, develops from eighteen months to three years old. Mr. Tweedy explained,

This is when I saw dad hitting mom and why did I have to stay with grandma all the time. In this stage, mom and dad are being occupied with other people and things. This is also when the 'me' stage begins. No doesn't mean no at this stage. It means that this is mine. The opposite of no is developing themselves, being expressive is not the same as being bad.

The initiative versus guilt stage lasts from three to five years of age. “This is when a child is being introduced to a system, usually a school system. This is the stage that a child becomes a tape recorder and is displaying what his behavior is at home.”

The industry versus inferiority stage begins at the age of five and lasts until thirteen years of age. “This is the productive stage and the child can become problematic, a joker, and often gets into trouble.”

The identity versus role confusion stage begins at the age of thirteen years old and lasts until twenty years of age. “This is the teenager years, the crazy years. Their bodies are changing and developing. This is also a defiant, rebellious stage for many adolescents.”

The intimacy versus isolation state begins at twenty years of age and lasts until forty. “This is when an individual becomes acquainted with life and love. This is when a person is looking forward to sharing his or her life with someone else.”

The generativity versus stagnation stage lasts from the forties to sixty. “This generation is more acquainted with ending things. For many, it would be foolish to start a new career or obtain a degree.”

The last stage, integrity versus despair, includes the age of sixty and above:

These individuals are often forgotten and placed in nursing homes. They want to know if the wisdom they have shared is valued or is it no longer needed. Ninety percent of a person’s development has occurred before an individual can control him/herself.

Mr. Tweedy said that these stages are often described as “normalizing the individual.” However, a relationship built on trust must be established in order for parishioners, who may be in the last stage described above, to share their wisdom with ex-offenders.

Pastor Turner shared with the parishioners “The Mindset of Ex-Offenders,” and explained how we can assist them in getting back into society and the workforce:

Parishioners must treat ex-offenders with dignity and respect. So often, we do not get to understand their mindset. Many of these individuals have been incarcerated for years, and they have become institutionalized. When many of them are released after spending ten or more years in jail/prison, the world is new to them. Whereas, in jail/prison they know what is required of them. They know they will receive "three hots and a cot." They know what time to get up in the morning and when to go to bed at night.

Parishioners must realize that these individuals need to have hope and clear information about their career ladder and their skill levels:

Some of the most intelligent men are in jail. Some of the best preachers are behind bars. They know the scripture better than you do. Therefore, be careful how you respond to them about being a sinner. You must not be negative to them. They are survivors and hustlers. They have skills to run a drug business. As parishioners, it is our duty to transfer those skills into marketable skills.

Many of these jails/prisons do not offer vocational skills to help them when they reenter society. A GED® (General Education Development) diploma is the least of the skills these individuals need. It is imperative that these individuals receive their GED® diploma before they are sent to DOC (Department of Correction). When individuals are sent to DOC, they must have a high school diploma or GED® diploma before they can enroll in a vocational program or workforce. These individuals receive sixty-five cents a day for working as an inmate at one of the DOC facilities:

Inmates are being charged daily for their incarceration, and the phone calls to family members are costly. They are facing issues that may become overwhelming to many of them. Some of them have DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) fines, and they need a vehicle to get around. They are in a Catch-22 situation, everything is against them. It seems as though there is nothing to help them.

Pastor Turner said that there are many places that hire ex-offenders and will benefit from hiring them.

Society can discriminate against ex-offenders. [Because of] the WOTC (Work Opportunity Tax Credit), employers get credit for hiring ex-offenders. Employers can get back one-half of the employee's salary. Employers can also apply for Federal bonding that provides insurance for employees up to \$5,000. There are incentives for employers who hire ex-offenders. Sometimes employers hire good employees. It is helping the employers and ex-offenders as well.

One parishioner asked Pastor Turner about programs that are offered when ex-offenders are released and the benefits of some of these programs:

There are substance abuse, anger management, and sex abuse programs that are available to help these individuals with these issues. A person who is an alcoholic must realize he cannot drink alcohol, period! He must not be around people who are drinking alcohol because he may suffer a relapse. Alcohol is a sickness, a disease. Substance abuse is a big issue. It is not an environment you want to be in. In Staunton, there is an AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meeting nightly for those individuals who need to attend. A person who is a pedophile is most likely not to change. It is hard to deliver these individuals because [being] a pedophile is part of their nature. Incarceration is worse for African-Americans. Many people are incarcerated because of poor representation. We say that you're innocent until proven guilty but in reality, you are guilty until proven innocent. Some people on Death Row do not have good representation. There have been many who have committed the same crime as the ones on Death Row; however, they had good lawyers. If you have a good lawyer, he/she can exonerate you of almost anything. DNA has benefited many who were proven guilty but with the help of DNA were found not guilty.

Another parishioner asked what percentage of those incarcerated are there due to mental illness:

I would estimate that thirty percent of the individuals are incarcerated because of mental illness. They do not need to be incarcerated but placed in a mental facility to receive treatment. Some of them are NGRI (Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity). CIT (Crisis Intervention Team), mental health workers help train police officers on how to identify mental illness.

It would be ideal to think that every man or woman who received ministering by trained parishioners would be completely delivered from addictions and other bad behaviors that keep him or her in bondage, incarcerated, or separated from loved ones. However, it is our duty to equip, educate, and empower as many ex-offenders as we can. Our families, children, communities, and society are counting on us to do just that. ☞

Rosie Spann-Johnson received a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Alcorn State University in 1989, a Master's Degree in Administration & Supervision from the University of Virginia in December 2004. She did further studies at Mary Baldwin College and Lynchburg College. Reverend Dr. Spann-Johnson received her Doctor of Ministry degree in May 2017 from Virginia University of Lynchburg. Dr. Spann-Johnson is the Lead GED and Mathematics Instructor for Campbell County Public Schools and also provides GED instruction to inmates within the Blue Ridge Regional Jail system. She serves as an Associate Minister of Spring Hill Baptist Church in Brookneal, Virginia.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FICTION AND STORYTELLING IN A PRISON CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a four-month reading program that was implemented at a state prison and outlines how fictional stories, both read and told, can develop psychological insights such as mentalization and emotional literacy. How activities such as this can have therapeutic benefits without actually being therapy is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

“This book is full of symbolism,” shares Mr. Carpenter¹, a student in my state prison reading group. Mr. Carpenter, like the others in the group, has struggled with reading his entire life. Now, at sixty-seven, he is tackling reading, and his love of reading emerges as we read *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl.

“What do you mean?” asks Mr. Calise.

“Well, James’ parents are killed and the peach is a magical fantasy, but it is also a symbol for the nurturing environment he needs,” answers Mr. Carpenter. He continues, “We could all use a peach—right?”

“Yeah,” adds Mr. Taylor, “there are other symbols in this story—the rhinoceros that killed James’ parents is like the pain and hurt we all experience in life. We are all killed by rhinos all the time.”

This is the sort of exchange I participated in with my students when I began teaching reading at a state prison. When I first arrived at the prison, I dug around the school looking for literature. There were not many fiction books, but I found enough copies of *James and the Giant Peach* to get us started. This classic novel by Roald Dahl is a fantasy of escape, empowerment, and friendship, and each day my students came to read with seriousness. Their glasses pushed down to the tips of their noses, they discussed the pain James felt and how we all need an adventure away from those who oppress us. All of my students struggled as readers, and reading instruction was integrated into our daily lessons. The discussions we had while reflecting on the reading pushed my own thinking about a book I had regarded to be for children, and taught me a great deal about the power of interpretation and reflection.

For four months in 2018, I had the opportunity to teach reading daily to students at a state prison. I was committed to using fiction and storytelling to teach reading despite the enormous resistance of the permanent teaching staff who taught reading through newspaper articles, bland stories in workbooks, and historical texts that they thought students would encounter on the General Education Development (GED) examination.

The benefits of reading and storytelling for improving well-being and emotional literacy have been increasingly recognized. My work at the prison was influenced by the work of The Reader Organisation as

1 All names used are pseudonyms.

described in Jane Davis's article (2009). The purpose of each reading group was to engage and stimulate adults learning to read by reflecting on literature and by listening to stories told orally. I hoped to offer an experience that might develop and enhance my student's ability to mentalize (Allen & Fonagy, 2006). Mentalization, which has much in common with the concept of emotional literacy, concerns the ability to recognize thoughts, feelings, and motivations in one's self and in others. Using this information to guide action and behavior is a foundation of mental health. Engaging in fiction and fantasy through literature and stories may have the potential to develop this capacity (Oatley, 2011).

THE BENEFITS OF READING FICTION

There are also recognized benefits in reading fiction in relation to well-being. Keith Oatley (2011) identifies how fiction can enhance capacities for understanding others, improving relationships, interacting in groups, and dealing with the problems of selfhood. He suggests that through reading we can create mental models to enlarge our ability to empathize. Joseph Gold (2001) has identified ten psychological consequences that may arise from the use of story and poetry in therapeutic encounters. These include language growth, learning about life, identification and modeling, cognitive shift (or reframing), problem-solving, learning about emotions, normalization, and sharing.

Others have argued that reading fiction cultivates empathy (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). When a person mentally travels into a story, picturing it in rich detail and getting into the minds of the characters, that person will be more adept at relating to people and be more inclined to assist others when they are in need (Johnson, Cushman, Borden, & McCune, 2013). There are other significant fruits of reading fiction, such as lessening people's racial bias (Johnson, Huffman, & Jasper, 2014) and raising their interest in the well-being of animals (Malecki, Pawlowski, & Sorokowski, 2016). There is even some evidence that reading regularly forecasts sharper, healthier mind (Bavishi, Slade, & Levy, 2016).

THE READING GROUPS

The purpose of the reading groups I created was to bring the pleasure and value of reading to my students. The structure was simple: at least one person reads aloud from a text—usually short stories, novels, or poetry rather than non-fiction or self-help books—and then the group discusses their responses to that text. The process of listening and reflecting is valuable and can help students attune to their own feelings and those described in the text.

The process of listening to literature being read aloud rather than reading internally allowed students to think about and reflect upon the content in a different way. It is a slower process than reading silently, but it is a shared experience which can help facilitate a more engaged and emotional response to the work. Real experiences can be compared and contrasted with what is read in a way that recognizes both the uniqueness and universality of the experience. Davis (2009) is convinced that literature not only helps us find enjoyment, but also helps us endure pain and difficulty.

THE ART OF STORYTELLING

I introduced an oral storytelling component to our reading groups. Telling stories is a universal activity that has been a means of entertainment, education, and a way of passing on traditional values and practices since time immemorial, and it is now enjoying something of a revival (Collins, 1999). Storytelling, in this way, is not the same as reading a text aloud or reciting from memory, despite some similarities. It is a more spontaneous

piece of social interaction—the storyteller makes eye contact with her audience and uses tone of voice and gesture to amplify meaning to paint pictures in the listener’s mind and create a unique, emotional event.

The stories told could be fictional, true, or a blending of the two. Often, fictional material will draw upon folkloric or mythic sources, stories that have lived in oral traditions. Real-life storytelling has also become increasingly popular with the growth of storytelling performances such as “The Moth” (<http://themoth.org>) or “True Stories Told Live” (www.truestoriestoldlive.com), in which people tell stories from their own lives in front of an audience. Oral storytelling seemed to fit very easily into the structure of our groups and balanced well with reading stories aloud. Both activities are about the experience of living, structured in ways that enable reflection.

DAILY INSTRUCTION

Our reading and storytelling groups met for one hour each day, five days a week. The program was open to whomever would like to participate—there was no element of compulsion, but it was integrated into a regular classroom and offered as part of the reading program. In the reading program, I taught basic reading and writing strategies, and we read novels together. *James and the Giant Peach*, a book with a theme of friendship, was our first experience. Although the characters in the book experience small conflicts, their friendship prevails time and again. Delving into this story provided space for students to discuss their own families and friendships, both lost and held.

My main innovation was the oral storytelling component, where we all told stories of many kinds. Sharing stories was a powerful emotional experience, establishing a storytelling format in the group and enabling my students to tell their own stories. In storytelling the teller and the listener interact in a way that echoes the bond between a carer a young child; both are engaged in a shared activity in which they can interact and are attuned emotionally (Frude & Killick, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The reading and storytelling groups worked well, even though my project was structured as a short-term intervention. The students who participated contributed with great enthusiasm. I had some concern that students might find both listening to stories and reading aloud more suitable for younger children or that reading youth novels might insult them, but my concerns were proven groundless. My students were happy to listen to stories and (usually) comfortable reading aloud to one another. Given the nature of incarceration, there were times when all was not plain sailing, but the extent and quality of the student’s engagement in the groups was remarkable.

The biggest impediment to the reading groups were the permanent teachers, who showed little interest in engaging in new, research-based approaches to teaching reading, writing, and listening. They were especially resistant to teaching fiction. I am not sure what the explanation for this is except that change is hard and teaching novels is often more work than using workbooks and worksheets. My short experiment perhaps indicates that professional development and further mentoring of teachers around the benefits of teaching fiction to their students is needed. Cultivating a more active reading culture among the teachers would help—encouraging teachers to form a reading group and meet together to talk about the readings may be a starting place.

Given the nexus of illiteracy, criminal actions, and high recidivism rates, we as a society should be doing everything we can to encourage reading behind bars. When I returned to my classroom after my students had

been on lockdown for over two weeks, we engaged in a debate about the transformative power of Roald Dahl's writing. For an hour, ten men sat joyously discussing a literary work. Mr. Potter said, "I thought my brain had stopped working, but reading and talking about this book has proven my brain still works." Fiction matters and reflecting on fictional stories and how we, as readers, experience them, matters—especially to incarcerated men and women. ☞

Diane Ketelle is the Dean of the School of Education and a Professor of Education at Mills College in Oakland, California. Diane's teaching in Mills's post-graduate programs in educational leadership has informed her practice as an administrator. Having taught in public schools, private universities, prisons, and in other countries as a two-time Fulbright Scholar, she brings a life-long commitment to education, to the liberal arts, and to an asset approach to education that values the cultural, emotional, and linguistic knowledge that every person brings to the task of learning. Diane's research focuses on life writing and she has pursued many interesting projects including a three year project in a prison. For the past two years, she has been collecting the life stories of female boxers in the Bay Area of California.

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CREATING OPPORTUNITY IN PRISON EDUCATION: INTERNS & TUTORS

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ABSTRACT

At Larch Corrections Center, a men’s prison in Southwest Washington, GED® Faculty Lauren Zavrel has created two original programs: an internship program for graduate students to gain experience in corrections education, and a tutor training curriculum for inmate teaching assistants (TAs) who tutor GED® and business students. Graduate interns majoring in Postsecondary Adult and Continuing Education from Portland State University were able to complete projects that benefit inmate students who are working toward a high school credential and/or who aspire to attend college. The benefits of inmates tutoring inmate students are evaluated from the faculty, inmate-TA, and inmate-student perspectives. Inmate-TAs were also interviewed and discussed the positive impacts tutoring has had on their self-confidence and academic goals. The TAs’ work is a major factor in maintaining the consistently high GED® credential completion rate in Larch Corrections.

PART 1: INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Introduction: An Unlikely Path

In 2010, I began graduate school at Oregon State University with the goal to work in corrections education. When it came time to complete my internship credits, however, I was at a loss; I already worked in higher education and could easily have interned there, but that did not fit exactly with teaching in corrections. I figured the best, albeit highly ambitious, approach was to ask the local jail to create a teaching internship for me so that I might get my foot in the concrete door. My faculty agreed, and I made my way into county corrections with the help of the Lane County Sheriff’s Department and Lane Community College.

Fast forward to 2016: Thanks to that first stepping stone, I became GED® faculty for a program at Clark College in Larch Corrections Center (LCC), a men’s minimum security prison. In 2017, I received approval from the Superintendent, Department Director, and Dean to develop an internship program at the prison and see if anyone would show interest in working with us. All the stakeholders held some skepticism; no one had tried this before, and we all wondered if anyone (other than me, seven years prior) would want to intern in corrections.

Graduate Student Internship Program Development & Projects

Internship opportunity announcements were shared with three local graduate programs at three different universities. Two graduate students from Portland State University responded to the posting, and after formal interviews and background checks, both were hired. The first intern, whom I will refer to as “S,” had a specific intent to work in corrections education. The second, Hanan Al’Zubaidy, had an interest to work with marginalized people, but not incarcerated people specifically.¹

¹ Names throughout have been used or altered according to DOC policies and/or the participants’ preferences.

The original posting listed possible project ideas for an intern; both were asked to identify the project idea(s) that most appealed to them.

S chose to work on the HS21+ for prison project. This entailed copying HS21+ open source curriculum, provided by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) in Washington, to an offline environment so that we may offer it within corrections in the future.

This project is of the utmost importance to our high school equivalency (HSE) student population; GED® tests have been approved by the SBCTC to exempt students from HS21+ credits. For example, if a student has passed the GED® Science test, he/she need not take science curriculum in HS21+ because a passed GED® test score counts as completed credits. This means that if we are able to offer both HS21+ and GED® curriculum simultaneously, we could offer two different paths to the same credential, which would result in higher numbers of graduates. As all GED® teachers are aware, GED® 2014 tests, like all high stakes tests, create barriers for many students who are otherwise demonstrating competencies in the curriculum, due in part to their single delivery method on a computer, and the fact they are timed tests. In HS21+, students are able to earn a high school diploma by demonstrating competencies in a variety of ways, just like high school students, and several students at Larch have expressed strong interest in HS21+ as an option. Students frequently ask why we do not offer HS21+ at the facility, and part of the answer is that the curriculum is not built for corrections. Other facilities are also working on this project on their own terms, and collectively, we can ready the curriculum for prison delivery.

Hanan chose to develop a reentry resource guide for aspiring college students. She pulled this wealth of content from the Internet and created a digital resource offline for our students to access in Canvas, which is the LMS of choice for all SBCTC affiliated colleges in Washington. This resource includes information about financial aid, college catalogs and detailed information about colleges throughout Washington, and scholarship information for inmates. At LCC and at many other facilities in the state, we are fortunate to have an in-house version of Canvas on our secure server. This means we can create courses at the prison without giving students access to the Internet, and share files such as course catalogs, videos, and anything else we deem suitable for our program.

This is important to students because, in many cases, it enables them to get a head start on applying for colleges that permit paper applications, fill out a FAFSA, write scholarship essays, and explore college programs prior to release. These tasks used to be at the discretion of faculty who have limited time to meet with students one-on-one to answer questions and research various colleges and programs throughout the state.

Reflections on Internship Program

In her reflection, Hanan wrote that the internship “opened my eyes to the disadvantages facing incarcerated students. Before this opportunity, I had not realized that working in corrections education was an option. I learned a lot throughout this experience, and have grown so passionate about the work.” Hanan went on to apply for and receive a classified position for Clark College at Larch Corrections to continue her work. S left the internship before the project was complete and did not wish to participate in an exit interview.

Additionally, because both interns’ projects required the use of the Canvas LMS, both completed Canvas training offered to Clark employees. This is a coveted opportunity among graduate students who aspire to work in higher education because such training is often lacking as part of graduate study, as it was in Hanan’s program at Portland State, despite the prevalence of Canvas in higher education environments.

The immediately obvious result of the reentry resource guide is the growing volume of FAFSAs and college applications completed at and sent from the facility. Students and former students may use any classroom to access information about academic programs, enrollment, and financial aid, alleviating the burden on education staff to work one-on-one with students outside of class and improving their chances of following through with education upon release.

In conclusion, the Education Department was satisfied with the results of the internship program in its first year and aspires to recruit more interns in 2019. Specifically, we want to create an option for interns to work remotely via Canvas if needed, as this will increase the scope of projects and decrease security concerns. We plan to recruit interns to work with the state's primary IT staff to alleviate his workload, as well as to assist our business faculty.

PART 2: INMATE TUTORS

Background Information

Until summer of 2018, the LCC Education Department had never employed more than two inmate teaching assistants (TAs) at a time; one was assigned to each of the two HSE instructors. My TA's name was Chris Randon, and the other, who assisted the adjunct HSE instructor, I will call H. Both had already been TAs when I began working at Larch. H and Chris were released in December 2017 and March 2018, respectively. In the summer of 2018, the Department hired two new TAs; in the fall, we hired two more, for a total of four. There was no training in place for TAs at that time.

The credentials to be hired as a TA consisted of:

- Passing security screening and background requirements of Department of Corrections (DOC): for example, no highly violent crimes
- Having at least nine months left on a sentence (so that they could commit 2-3 terms to the position)
- Having earned an HSE credential
- Completing an interview with Clark College faculty and demonstrating an interest in helping peers as the primary reason for applying for the position

TAs are employed as inmates and work for DOC for 42 cents per hour, not to exceed \$55 per month in wages. Their official job title is "Teaching Assistant," but roughly 90% of their work consists of tutoring students in HSE and business classes, and they are therefore hereafter referred to as tutors. At the time of this writing, we employ four tutors, whom I will call M, G, F, and T.

We interview tutor candidates with the same questions and standards as we would outside of prison, and this catches most of them by surprise. T wrote, "The interview to be a TA at LCC was far more intensive than that of [the other prison]. [...] I was literally handed the job at [the other prison]. I really felt like I had to earn it when I came here to LCC. I actually liked that my interview was closer to a lot of the job interviews I've had on the outside." Chris reflected on tutoring at another prison and stated that he had to "fake it till [he] made it" but that at Larch, he had to learn to be honest when he did not know how to help a student. He reflected that the expectations of him were higher at Larch. After being hired, the four current tutors expressed surprise upon hire that they would be so involved with students, extra projects, and be asked for their input about instruction, course materials, and other education topics.

This variance of standards should not be read as a negative critique of other facilities. To the contrary, we have the opportunity to work only with inmates with four or fewer years on their sentences, and we are tasked to prepare them for release. The culture at a minimum security camp is very different than a medium security prison, and we are able to capitalize on our role within corrections to help our inmate staff improve their employability and self-confidence in what will be their final inmate job.

Tutor Impacts on Student Success

Larch has the highest GED® completion rate per capita of any DOC facility in the state of Washington as of 2017: 46 among a maximum population of 480. While many factors contribute to completion rates, including class size, resources, class time, and so forth, tutors have a direct impact on our completion rate, which means they have a direct impact on students' recidivism, upward mobility, and opportunities to attend college. Chris

and I created Table 1 with completion numbers provided by DOC for the 2016-17 academic year for all WA DOC facilities and compared those numbers against each facility's total capacity (Paris, 2017).

In the 2017-18 academic year, we had 42 graduates and attribute the decrease to the malfunction of Pearson-Vue testing software for about 10 weeks. At the time of this writing, three quarters of the way through the 2018-19 academic year, we have 40 completions.

Of my students who earned a GED® credential from September 2016 to March 2018, 44 out of a total of 55 graduates (80%) from my courses used Chris's help on a regular, daily basis. Roughly, I estimate that Chris interacted with about 50% of all my students daily, as about 50% turn down help when asked, and it is not surprising that a disproportionate number of those who employed his help were successful in completing a GED® credential.

I also began to gather data anonymously and voluntarily from Larch graduates to learn how they perceived tutor help. The graduates for this data completed credentials in the summer of 2018 or later, which means they are reflecting on the help of our current four tutors. When asked the question, "How much credit do you give the help of the tutor(s) toward completing your GED®?" 100% of those who responded said that they used tutors' help for math while only 5 out of 24 said they used tutors' help in any other GED® test subject.

Additionally, I asked all four current tutors and Chris to answer several open-ended reflective questions about their tutoring experiences, one of which was whether they felt their work had a direct impact on the number of completions at the facility. They were not guided in their answers and each answered only for himself. Answering the questions was optional, and no incentive for answering questions was offered.

Chris wrote:

I believe that a lot of students looked up to me for the things I did not just in class, but also [on the prison grounds]. I was not afraid to be myself and do the things I enjoyed. But I was respectful, respected, and always willing to help. It is a wonderful feeling when a guy fresh [from another facility] introduces himself to you, and says 'I want to get my GED®, and my buddy told me to find you.' It told me what people were saying about me when I wasn't around. I don't believe we would have had as many completers if I wasn't there.

F wrote:

[We] definitely contribute to the [number of] GED® completers. Offender tutors have the ability to overcome nonverbal conflicts that students have that teachers from the outside may not be aware of.

M wrote:

I feel like [we] have a huge impact on the students as well as the amount of GED® completers in the facility. Tutors are in a unique position to be able to relate to students in a way that teachers just can't. We can also work with and encourage the students at times that are less formal because we live and recreate in the same places as them. [...] For a lot of the guys in here, we may be all they have as far as people to reach out to and that can make all the difference.

G wrote:

Tutors [...] are necessary to assure student success. I have learned this as a tutor at LCC, that the relationship between tutor and students is greater than the one from teacher to student. Students in here (inmates) most of the time see teachers as the system (the authority that makes them do things that they don't want to do or they believe they don't need) [...] Tutors develop a close and special tie with students because they see us as their equal.

T wrote:

I honestly think that there wouldn't be nearly as many people getting their GED®s without us, and

here's why: as fellow inmates we can encourage and motivate the people we tutor in ways that a teacher or other staff member will never be able to do. We are the students' peers, and they look up to us. [...] We build them up when they fail, and we celebrate with them when they're successful.

Including Tutors in Tutor Training Development

Impressed with the level of work and impact all tutors have had on our student success, I was inspired to explore sustainable means to elevate and formalize their position within DOC and create a system by which future tutors could benefit from working in a higher education environment. I launched the effort to create and formalize tutor training, which was further elevated by the effort to obtain tutor training certification through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). CRLA certification is pending at the time of this writing, but we are poised to become the first prison education program on record to earn this certification.

The tutor training program extends over three weeks and covers the following topics:

1. Responsibilities and Duties of Tutors
2. Do's and Don'ts
3. Adult Learners and Learning Styles
4. Tutors as Role Models
5. Communication Skills
6. Managing Difficult Situations
7. Active Listening and Paraphrasing
8. Critical Thinking Skills
9. Goal Setting

The four current tutors collectively authored materials that will be used throughout the training curriculum. While I could easily have worked on the materials myself or replicated those used at the Clark Campus Tutoring Center, which also holds CRLA certification, I wanted to empower the tutors with an opportunity to be part of a unique project unlike anything else they would undertake during incarceration. I wanted to do this for several reasons:

- To include the inmate-tutor perspective on what should be included in inmate-tutor training.
- To create an opportunity for this group of tutors to meta-train. In other words, the chance to develop training materials for future tutors was simultaneously a means for them to receive training and also validate their successes as tutors and as a team.
- To include diverse perspectives in terms of race: F and Chris are black, G is Mexican-American and English is his second language, and T and M are white.
- To validate tutor growth already occurring.

Let me be clear. Chris was a champion for his peers and never received training or formal validation of his work as a tutor while he was incarcerated. The four current tutors have proven that he was not an anomaly; there is something moving and deeply transformative about the opportunity for inmates to help their peers. When, within a prison, a man finds himself not only willing and able to rise above the culture and standards of his peers, the expectations of society, and even his own preconceived self-identity as maybe-capable (which is a tall enough order), but also able to put his needs aside to help his peers do the same, it is worth the attention of those who hold positions of power over him. It deserves recognition because it defies everything about prison culture and criminal mindset, and embodies everything about how we hope inmates leave prison.

Without a formal record of behaviors and accomplishments that transcend their criminality, inmates leave prison with little more than the formal record of that criminality. The tutors have inspired me to develop a

program by which they may receive formal recognition for work they already do because they are already subject matter experts without necessarily knowing they are. The intent of the training program is not to generate skills in which tutors are deficient, but instead to honor the work of this small, pivotal, unlikely, and extraordinary cohort of hero-felons.

Tutoring as the Catalyst for Academic Pursuits

Tutoring has obvious effects on tutor confidence, especially in the tutor's self-perceived capacity for higher education. Only one tutor, G, was serious about pursuing college upon release before becoming a tutor. All five of them (including Chris) now plan to attend college and pursue at least associate degrees, and they credit their current academic goals to their experiences working as tutors. Also, they are all pursuing scholarships.

Chris was in prison for ten years. During his last several months, he had my help to access college catalogs, a FAFSA, scholarship information, and practice placement tests. He even decided to learn Spanish in his spare time and asked to borrow Spanish books. When I asked him to reflect on why he decided to attend college to study engineering, he wrote:

What influenced me to go to college, was Lauren Zavrel. [...] she is a force. No human being I have ever known (including my momma) has had the ability to [...] make me believe I have the intellectual capacity I possess [...] She provided me with an environment where I was free of prison politics and culture, and allowed me space to really learn about intellectual me.

He goes on to say that rather than joining a trade union upon his release from prison, this experience led him straight from prison to college.

While Chris's words give me complete credit for his decision to pursue higher education, I feel an obligation here to include his perception because all I really did was hold the mirror to his academic potential and expose him to the culture of higher education. He performed above and beyond and was also a "force" in the classroom; students constantly sang his praises behind his back and admired his tenacious, passionate approach to higher education. No one taught him that. When I started at Larch, he was already the hero he left as, only with an inferior sense of self and, therefore, lesser ambitions.

As a teacher, I have always held fast to the idea that part of my job is to *educate* student success, which, as the root of the word educate, means "bring out or develop (something latent or potential)" (Stevenson, 2010). That philosophy relies on the premise that students (and tutors) already have within them the tools and intelligence to pass tests, earn scholarships, and succeed in higher education. They only need help drawing out their own potential and strengths. If it wasn't for Chris's trailblazing and unprecedented commitment to helping students, I would never have been inspired to commit energy to tutor development in the first place. I saw great potential in Chris, and while his compliments are humbling, his successes after release speak louder.

The four current tutors are also excited to normalize the inmate-tutor prison-to-college pipeline. While the focus of the questions I asked them was exclusively about tutoring, I might also add that all of them are enrolled in the business program at Larch. This is a college-level, credit program also offered by Clark College, and it plays a significant role in preparing its students for the caliber and rigor of college courses, as well as introducing them to the culture of higher education. While none of the tutors aspire to major in business, and credit their newfound academic goals to tutoring, this experience should not be underestimated or overlooked. Chris also took business and other trades courses during his incarceration at LCC and elsewhere.

T wrote:

Before becoming a TA, I was just planning on joining a union and getting into an apprenticeship program [...] Now, after being a TA, [...] I want to pursue at least a bachelor's degree in computer science or engineering. I've remembered how good it feels to learn new things and exercise my brain [...]. None of that would have happened if I wasn't a TA. I wouldn't have had the chance to have some of the important conversations with education staff that led me down the path of higher education.

In February 2019, I had the honor to announce to T that Clark College had awarded him a scholarship to use after his release in the fall of 2019. His application highlighted his successes both as a TA and as a business student at Larch.

M wrote:

Being a tutor has influenced my interest in attending college by showing me that I am comfortable in an educational setting, that I have a general interest in understanding and summarizing concepts for others, and that I have a capacity to do better for myself and the people around me. Before becoming a TA, I was not comfortable in an academic setting, nor was I motivated to do better for anyone else or even myself.

G wrote:

After being a tutor at LCC, I learned that there are many opportunities for everyone to study a career and earn a degree [...]. I have learned and share this information with many students encouraging them and myself as well to continue on my education to seek a better opportunity [...]. I would like to become an engineer and to help my community [...].

F wrote:

Working with students has shown me that I still have room to grow and learn. [...] This experience is beneficial to my children. [...] With the information that I am covering I will be up to the challenge of helping them with homework. I have the opportunity to get a degree because I'm currently involved with the Clark Education system. The information is so fresh and available and I am building confidence to be able to complete the work once I'm released.

Tutors Gain Job Skills

All four current tutors say they have acquired or improved their job skills as a result of tutoring. All four listed improved communication skills. Other skills included professionalism, time management, teamwork, problem solving, English language skills, and math mastery. In training, tutors are also required to create an updated resume that reflects their tutor training and experience tutoring students, which they can use upon release to help secure employment.

Chris reflected on the skills he obtained as a tutor:

Being a T.A. taught me that you can't PRETEND to know what you're talking about. [...] I learned early on that I have to know when I need to seek help [...]. This skill has saved me many times already at my job and at school [...]. Knowing when to ask for guidance has propelled me forward in my job rapidly. As far as school, this skill has helped me know when to get [...] to the tutoring center [and] ask for help.

It should be noted that two of the four current tutors are actively pursuing tutoring positions at Clark College as part of their release plans in the next six months. The other two do not release soon, but both have expressed interest in tutoring upon release. Because Clark College facilitates the training from which our training curriculum was born, our tutors have specific and relevant experience that will help them transition into tutoring positions on campus.

This is arguably the most powerful outcome of tutor training in prison because the biggest hurdle upon release for many inmates is finding work. Even more challenging is securing meaningful work that can flex around and even complement a college schedule and lifestyle. When a person is adjusting to both the outside world and the new, unfamiliar college campus culture, the security and sense of belonging a tutor position on campus provides is paramount to his confidence and likelihood to stay enrolled. It also enables him to continue the process of building job skills and experience in "the real world."

Benefits of Cohort Model: Teamwork and Tutors Training Tutors

Whereas Chris was highly territorial about "his students," and became agitated when another inmate

wanted to volunteer to help tutor during class time, having a cohort of tutors seems to create a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. When Chris was employed, he was the only tutor assigned to both of my classes for over a year, so when we started to recruit more tutors, he questioned his own performance and became distraught.

The opposite paradigm exists with our current model; when we hired two tutors at a time and were transparent about the agenda to hire more, it unintentionally created a sense of teamwork for all new tutors, and such is reflected both in their work and in their written responses.

M wrote:

If I were the only tutor in this facility, [...] I would not be able to supply the amount of aid that students desperately thirst for. I would not be exposed to different styles and methods of tutoring that are employed [by] my peers, as well as not being pushed to be the best I can be for the others around me in the same position. When we can, we try to make the job easier for the others by sharing material and information.

T wrote:

There's too many students for just one person to help effectively, and having so many people vying for my attention would be far too overwhelming and stressful for me. The students not only wouldn't have as much of my time, but I am not always the best fit, as far as teaching style, for some of the students. [...] Having other TAs to bounce ideas off of, ask questions and opinions of, and to vent to if necessary, all help me to be a better, happier, and more effective TA.

Furthermore, having a greater number of tutors also allows us to formalize the tutor-training-tutor model. Because the training sessions are collaborative and include group work, fewer than three tutors in training is not ideal. More experienced tutors may sit in to create a larger group and mentor new tutors through the training. Tutors may rotate in and out of sessions so that new tutors benefit from a variety of input from different tutors and get to know all of their teammates through training.

CONCLUSIONS

Arguably, the most powerful statements from the tutors are those that speak to the deeply meaningful lessons they have taken from helping their peers. G wrote,

I have learned that it feels better when you give than when you receive because you will always win by helping others. [When students graduate,] you have a feeling of completeness that is hard to describe, just to know that you have helped someone change their life.

The idea that their strengths need not be used to hurt others, but instead to propel others and, as a byproduct, propel themselves forward on a good path, a hopeful path, is an epiphany I have had the privilege to witness all of them have. T's reflection on this topic is moving, and I think it only right that he have the last word:

What I've learned about myself as a result of tutoring is that I'm not the animal that I used to be [...]. Tutoring has helped me realize that I don't have to be menacing to be powerful. I don't have to take away from someone in order to add value to myself. I can add value to myself while adding value to someone else. I can handle difficult situations without resorting to violence, or manipulation. I can resolve conflicts peacefully and intelligently. I don't always have to have my own way, and I've learned to value other peoples' thoughts and opinions. [...] So much of what I plan to do and what I am currently doing to better myself for the future is directly related to the effort that the education staff [...] is making to help [tutors], and I am super grateful for it. Thanks. ☘

Lauren Zavrel is GED® Faculty for Clark College in Larch Corrections Center, a minimum security men’s prison in Southwest Washington. She has taught GED® classes in corrections since 2014, but started her teaching career in 2007 when she taught motorcycle safety courses for Team Oregon. Her bachelor’s degree is in Spanish and French from the University of Oregon and her master’s degree from Oregon State University is in Adult Education.

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TABLE 1—GED® DIPLOMAS EARNED AT WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FACILITIES IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2017

DOC Facility	Total Pop	GED® diplomas in 2017	% of pop. earned a GED® diploma
LCC	480	46	9.58%
OCC	381	31	8.14%
WSP	2439	142	5.82%
Coyote	2468	133	5.39%
Mission	321	16	4.98%
Clallam	858	41	4.78%
Shelton	1268	58	4.57%
Monroe	2400	109	4.54%
Airway	2258	91	4.03%
WCCW	738	28	3.79%
CCCC	480	15	3.13%
Stafford	1936	48	2.48%
<i>Source:</i> Washington State Department of Corrections, 2018			

THE MINNESOTA STANDARD ADULT DIPLOMA: HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR INMATES

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ABSTRACT

The new Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma program has evolved into a viable secondary credential option within the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). This competency-based credential broadened the scope of instruction to include digital literacy and work readiness, providing hope and opportunity for individuals struggling to earn a diploma. Teachers embed contextualized instruction and “real world” examples into lessons. This program has flourished and is a perfect fit with the overall DOC’s model featuring career planning. A significant increase has now occurred in the number of inmate students achieving secondary credentials. This unique program is aligned to Minnesota’s K-12 and ABE standards. The program helps ensure that as many inmates as possible are able to obtain a secondary credential while simultaneously obtaining the necessary knowledge and skills to make them college and career ready and less likely to return to prison after release.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Theresa Luther-Dolan remembers introducing the Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma Program (ADP) at the correctional facility in Faribault, Minnesota on February 27, 2015:

I walked into the prison classroom with all the desks arranged so the learners were sitting in sort of a circle. We were all in an equal position. I could see the eagerness on their faces and sat down next to one of them. He seemed nervous. As I looked around the circle, I noticed that all eyes were on me. They seemed very ready to hear about a new program that might bring them the success that had eluded them in the past. After I explained how excited we were to get this program going, I said to them:

“You are our pioneers, the first students in this new program. We are counting on you to work hard and give it your best shot. Your previous experiences, your tests, and your coursework will help you

earn this diploma. And you are so important because what we learn from your experience will shape this program moving forward.”

The young man next to me leaned over and commented, “I really need to do this before I leave. I don’t know if I can, but now I know I’m going to try really hard.”

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS EDUCATION OVERVIEW

On any given day, 2,400 offenders (we use the term “offender” interchangeably with “inmate” throughout this paper) are enrolled in education in the nine adult correctional facilities that make up the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). The DOC Education “school district” is collectively referred to as Minnesota Career Education Center (MCEC) and features secondary and post-secondary classes. Programming is guided by the MCEC’s *Master Academic Plan* which features its mission/vision/values as well as biennial goals, strategies, and performance measures (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2016).

Approximately 73% of adult offenders have a verified secondary credential. Newly-incarcerated adult offenders for whom a secondary credential is not verified are mandated into adult basic education (ABE) programming. As students advance in academic skills, they eventually qualify to enter classes where they can work toward their secondary credential. Offender students in ABE programming take TABE tests once each quarter to measure their progress. Upon earning a secondary diploma, offenders may apply to get into one of MCEC’s post-secondary programming options.

Post-secondary opportunities include a myriad of career technical education programs that are certified by Century College, as well as Associate of Arts-level college classes taught by adjunct instructors from one of our higher education partners. A variety of other programs, services and classes are available through the MCEC, e.g. Parenting, Art, Special Education, English Learners (EL), and writing workshops.

SECONDARY CREDENTIAL OPTIONS

Until 2015, the options for obtaining a secondary credential while incarcerated in Minnesota were to pass the GED® or to complete a traditional high school credit-based diploma. Passing a high stakes test was daunting to many of our adult learners, especially upon implementation of the new GED® 2014 series. Our students, per our own requirement, have to reach a valid 9.0 on the TABE assessment to even qualify to take a GED Ready™ test. Then, they need to achieve a “likely to pass” score on the GED Ready™ to qualify for the official GED® test. In addition, most of our adult learners had earned very few high school credits prior to incarceration, which meant it could take years to complete a traditional high school diploma. Thus, the prospect of a third, “competency-based” diploma was eagerly welcomed by staff and offender students alike.

A NEW COMPETENCY-BASED DIPLOMA

The Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma (Adult Diploma) is a third secondary credential option for adults in Minnesota. The Adult Diploma is a competency- and experience-based secondary credential issued by the state department of education for adult students that complete an authorized ADP in ABE via an approved portfolio. The individual student portfolio includes evidence of the student’s experience and demonstration of competencies in the diploma’s domains. The Adult Diploma has five domains and 20 competency areas within those domains. (Table 1)

These five domains have competencies that are aligned to Minnesota’s high school academic standards and Minnesota’s ABE content standards, including the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS) (Pimentel, 2013), the Academic, Career, and Employability Skills Transitions Integration Framework (ACES TIF) (Conklin Olson, 2016), and the Northstar Digital Literacy (NSDL) (Minnesota Literacy Council, 2019) standards. Students have the choice to demonstrate their competencies in each domain in a variety of approved completion options: past experience (e.g., in high school, work, or postsecondary), standardized tests (e.g., GED®, ACCUPLACER, ACT, and NSDL assessments), ABE instruction, and applied and experiential learning projects.

The Adult Diploma option was shaped by more than 100 Minnesota adult educators. It officially launched in 2015, but the development and approval process started in 2011 with a committee of 12 representatives from Literacy Action Network (the state’s ABE member organization), local ABE programs, and the Minnesota Department of Education’s (MDE) ABE office. The committee developed a legislative proposal to authorize the new diploma option combining academic, career readiness, and personal and professional success skills. Literacy Action Network was successful in gaining bipartisan support that led to passing the legislation authorizing this new diploma option and calling for a legislative task force to further develop the concept.

In 2013, the Adult Diploma Legislative Task Force formed with 12 members, including representatives from local ABE programs, the state’s public postsecondary system, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and MDE. The task force developed a report with recommended additional legislation to implement the Adult Diploma and identified the current five diploma domains (Minnesota Department of Education, 2014).

The recommended additional legislation was passed in 2014. MDE convened the first Adult Diploma Working Group, which was a voluntary group of roughly 100 local ABE program staff. Over 12 months, this working group developed specific competencies in each domain, recommended competency completion options in each domain, outlined online portfolio and pilot program criteria, and created and delivered pilot program training modules.

PILOTING THE ADP

The Adult Diploma Pilot Programs launched January 2015 with 13 approved local and regional ABE programs. Close to 150 staff participated in the three days of orientation and training. The original pilot programs included metro and suburban programs, regional rural programs, and two Minnesota correctional facilities (MCF): MCF–Faribault and MCF–St. Cloud. The second round of pilot programs launched in 2016 with six additional programs, including MCF–Shakopee and MCF–Stillwater. Ongoing support, technical assistance, and training were offered in monthly working groups and online resource sharing.

Per ADP requirements, teachers from these facilities received training in how to integrate CCRS and employability skills into their instruction. Student candidates for the Adult Diploma are required to demonstrate attainment of specific CCR Standards and employability skills, using evidence or artifacts, and include the evidence or artifacts in a personal portfolio that is reviewed by MDE.

Participants demonstrated gains in their literacy levels. Students from the two DOC pilot sites had an average TABE Reading grade level equivalency (GLE) of 8.0. Through the rigorous and focused instruction, the Adult Diploma candidates increased their average TABE Reading level to 10.1 GLE. By the end of 2016, there were 106 ADP graduates from these two sites, the majority coming from MCF–Faribault.

Starting in 2017, an annual application and training process for new ADP sites and staff was implemented.

Before a local ABE program can launch an ADP, it must:

1. Apply to MDE;
2. Participate in a nine-month CCRS implementation cohort; and
3. Complete the two-day ADP orientation and training. All local programs are expected to send representatives to the quarterly full-day adult diploma working group sessions for updates, support, technical assistance and training.

INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFTS

Prior to the ADP, there were several instances of students who had been stuck in literacy programming because they were unable to attain the prerequisite TABE scores necessary to take a GED® test. As one can imagine, after a year of struggling with little advancement, their quarterly TABE tests became quite stressful. If students earned a satisfactory score, they were allowed to move on with the GED®; if they fell short, their only option was to keep on studying the same materials. While there is a degree of validity in this *know-it-to-show-it* method, it is easy to question whether English learners (EL) and students with significant learning challenges were being effectively served and assessed. After all, many EL students could communicate effectively in English, but when issued a stressful, timed assessment, they were unable to read, comprehend, and respond to 50 questions in 50 minutes. Language, not intelligence, was their barrier. As compared to test-based credentials, the ADP is significantly more responsive to the diverse needs of adult learners.

The instructional shift with implementation of the ADP meant that students were no longer stuck in the TABE-to-GED® test cycle. In the ADP they were able to demonstrate competencies through a portfolio of learning artifacts that were assessed by trained reviewers. This shift presented a positive change for teaching methods and the implementation of reinvigorated curriculum.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

At the classroom level, the greatest instructional shift in implementing the ADP was transitioning from a test-based credentialing model into a competency-based model. Teachers at MCF–Faribault and MCF–St. Cloud engaged in cooperative planning and some were assigned new teaching responsibilities. “Such a feat does not occur overnight, and it was nearly seven months between our initial involvement in the ADP and our first graduate—indeed, since that first graduate, we have gone through several iterations of our program” (Kuehnel, personal communication, February 27, 2015).

Employability, career development, and digital literacy were not fully embedded into the MCEC curriculum prior to ADP. Thankfully, MDE’s ABE office does have a strong statewide teacher professional development program through its partnership with ATLAS, which had developed and implemented the ACES TIF program referenced earlier in this paper. Most of the state’s ABE teachers (including DOC) had previously participated in professional development on this rich instructional framework that defines the academic, career, and employability skills essential for adult learners to successfully transition to post-secondary education, career training, the workplace, and community involvement. Teachers were accustomed to integrating the TIF skills into their instruction and when it became a required component of the ADP competencies, they strived to ensure that their current delivery of ACES TIF was effective. Embedding a career pathway focus and student advising were major changes to the MCEC ABE scope and sequence. To assist students as they transitioned to the program, a new foundations course called “Game Plan” was developed at the DOC site with the largest ADP participation, MCF–Faribault.

Game Plan is a curriculum for developing employability skills that includes career exploration, goal setting, self-management, and navigating systems. It also serves as an orientation to ABE and DOC education, with the focus on moving an individual forward in attaining personal education goals and formulating their career pathway. During the three weeks of Game Plan, high school transcripts and previous (if any) GED® test scores are reviewed, a coursework plan is determined, and initial student advising takes place. The coursework plan is very individualized because not all students need to complete all four academic subject areas, as they may have high school credits or GED® test scores that fulfill one or more ADP competency areas. Advising and guiding the student through the planning process is a very important piece of the ADP. Also, during the Game Plan course, students complete self-assessments, embark on career exploration, and identify a career pathway. By the time a learner completes all the activities and instruction in Game Plan, the student has developed a Future Pathway Plan and has a first draft of a resume. The individual's Future Pathway Plan is created using PowerPoint and presented orally.

The required Future Pathway Plan and the enhancement of digital literacy skills through PowerPoint is one of several ways for the learner to demonstrate competencies in digital literacy and the CCR Standards for Speaking and Listening. The Game Plan course is a critical component in completing the Adult Diploma. Learners typically complete this class first when they start the ADP, sometimes simultaneously with other academics such as math or language arts. Game Plan inspires a very student-centered education planning experience, with the learners taking ownership of their goals and the process for reaching those goals.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

As rewarding as it was for MCF–Faribault to emerge as the state's lead organization in implementing the new ADP, and as inspiring as it was to see the passion for the program grow in students and teachers alike, the process definitely has had challenges. However, strong problem-solving strategies combined with hard work and excellent support from the state allowed staff to soldier on and address the challenges.

MDE continued to hold working group meetings for ADP staff for discussion and clarification on program requirements and expectations (e.g., individual standards for competency areas). Teachers continued to work on aligning CCR Standards to Adult Diploma competency areas. DOC staff from ADP facilities also organized their own series of planning meetings and professional learning communities to help teachers get on track with the new ADP mindset. There was a need to clear up confusion and allow time for discussion about credit- vs. competency-based instruction. Teachers needed to gain a deeper understanding of how to contextualize their instruction and make it real-world focused to help the learners be more engaged. During DOC staff meetings, time was allocated for instructors to align and clarify processes for submitting candidate's portfolios and for sharing resources and newly-developed lessons. Curriculum resource development was critical for making sure that the rigor of the standards were being met. Whenever possible, time was allowed for developing clear instructional models. These strategies and professional development are ongoing as additional correctional facilities add the ADP to their education programming.

Each facility is unique in its instructional delivery model. For example, some sites feature one-room schoolhouses, and some have a higher percentage of EL learners and/or low-literacy learners. A basic model for the DOC was developed during the pilot year of the program, and it is easily adapted to the type of facility where it is being integrated.

One of the beautiful aspects of the ADP is, as noted earlier, that it is directly aligned to CCRS, which allows for students to be dual-tracked between the GED® and the ADP. The preparation is the same for both pathways. CCRS-aligned curricula, including McGraw-Hill's *Common Core Achieve* and the Steck-Vaughn GED®

series, can still be used to teach general concepts and assess the acquisition of knowledge. In the end, many students use one or more GED® test passing scores as artifacts for some competency areas. As Adam Kuehnel recalled:

We repurposed old materials. We were only limited by our own creativity. There were limited funds to purchase additional materials, so we relied on our own resources and adapted them to meet the rigor of the standards. This curriculum variable meant that as we transitioned into the ADP’s project-based model of learning and competency demonstration, the students were also developing the skills they’d need to pass a test-based credential. This dual track also nullified the argument of students who claimed they were not participating in the ADP and simply wanted to take the GED®. (personal communication, January 4, 2019)

Every Minnesota correctional facility holds two to four graduation events each year. One of the early Adult Diploma graduates was the featured student speaker at the January 12, 2018 MCF–Faribault ceremony. His message to fellow offender students included the following words of inspiration:

To the students that are present here today because they had a successful level change, I was in your seat three months ago. You can do it. Stay focused and you will be graduating next. And to all the big boys with the college diplomas, trades and skills, today proves we all got fight in us. We have to take our life back, giving up is easy, it’s the difficult things that make us strong. So today I say, congratulations to the class of 2018! (Student graduation speaker, personal communication)

BEEFING UP THE CURRICULUM—SAMPLES

Project-based instruction became a new approach for learning and for the students to demonstrate knowledge. One content area in which project-based instruction was initially implemented was English Language Arts (ELA). Prior to the days of the ADP, students were only required to demonstrate marginal writing skills as they prepared for the 2002-series GED® extended response. There was no programmatic need for writing beyond that. One of the demands of the Adult Diploma, however, requires students to submit a writing sample that demonstrates command of the CCRS’s three key ELA shifts: complexity, evidence, and knowledge.

At the time of the ADP’s initial piloting, Adam Kuehnel, the ELA instructor at MCF–Faribault, had been using GED® writing textbooks to prepare students for the extended response essay. While these materials were valuable for GED® extended response practice, they were not as effective in developing a writing sample for the Adult Diploma. As a result of this, and other corrections infrastructure/technology limitations, the instructor developed his own essays to lead students toward competency completion. The focus of these essays was to provide students with rigorous, qualitatively- and quantitatively-assessed reading selections in which they could identify credible information and determine the validity of two opposing arguments. These tasks align to specific standards/anchors found in the CCRS, notably CCR Reading Anchor Standards 8 and 9 (CCR-R 8 and CCR-R 9). Unlike textbook essays, Kuehnel’s were significantly longer and contained more evidence and information for the student to consider (CCR-R 1). Instead of approaching the texts as a mere exercise in academic reading, the students were told to consider themselves as judges in a writing contest between two authors. Subjectively, the article with the greatest amount of credible evidence and logical reasoning was to serve as the focal point of the subsequent extended response argument; the lesser-developed article was to be addressed for its faults—usually weak claims and unsupported opinions.

In total, Kuehnel wrote 21 article sets that mimicked real-world events, with each essay a story from the fictitious town of Happyville, Minnesota. This real-world mimicry helped students draw connections and

conclusions between fictional texts and factual occurrences (CCR-R 10). Each of the articles was assessed by either Renaissance Learning's ATOS Text Analyzer or Pearson's Reading Maturity Metric as being at the CCRS ELA/Literacy Grade Level E (Grades 9-12).

Kuehnel also developed an essay deconstruction technique through which the students looked at the two opposing points of view (CCR-R 6), determined central ideas and themes (CCR-R 2), and analyzed the structure of each essay (CCR-R 5) in order to understand how the argument evolved over the course of the text (CCR-R 3). As the students deconstructed the essays, they were gathering evidence to be used in the construction of a GED®-style extended response writing sample. Likewise, they were developing valuable text-based reading strategies that would help them pass the GED® Reasoning through Language Arts test, if they chose to include that test as part of their ADP graduation portfolio. This project-based model of essay deconstruction and extended response writing was shared with the other facilities, where teachers had the opportunity to make the appropriate changes to fit the needs of their students and learning environments.

A teacher at MCF-Stillwater developed curriculum for a capstone project that incorporated Mathematics and ELA/Speaking and Listening. The lessons and project, consisting of creating a floor plan, involved solving real-world mathematics problems involving area, volume, and surface area of 2- and 3-dimensional objects comprised of triangles, quadrilaterals, cubes, and right prisms. In preparation, students first studied coordinate graphs, scale drawings, area, perimeter, and volume from a variety of sources (using old, "repurposed" materials). The end product was a complete 3-D floor plan made out of cardboard which the students presented to the class.

These project-based models allow students to move at their own pace toward completing the competency areas. In ELA, students who are skilled at academic reading and writing are able to demonstrate competency in a short period of time, while other students with limited ELA skills struggle for longer periods of time to capture their ideas—but they are always making forward progress. For example, in the case of one student who had suffered from the lasting effects of a traumatic brain injury, this meant writing one or two sentences per class and conferencing with the teacher to check progress and idea fluency. After a few weeks, he produced a piece of writing that gave him a great deal of pride and proved that he could achieve more than he thought possible. This is diversity-informed instruction! On average, students with ELA experience are able to complete these competency areas in six to eight weeks, or fewer, if they use a GED® test score as part of their ADP portfolio. The same is true for students completing mathematics competency areas—they complete in an average of six to eight weeks. Instructor Kuehnel explained, "With this type of program, students work at their own pace. One sentence per day eventually equals an essay" (personal communication, January 4, 2019).

Since the initial pilot, the DOC's ADP has expanded to other correctional facilities, and teachers are more motivated and are creating new contextualized lessons that are aligned to CCRS. These newly-created lessons are being used not only by their DOC peers but by other ABE programs in the state as well. According to Brad Hasskamp, the Adult Secondary Credential and Education Policy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education:

Not only are the DOC programs producing more Standard Adult High School Diploma graduates than any other ABE program, they are clear leaders that are improving ABE across the state by contributing their curriculum and assignment templates. Their graduates are producing impressive work, and I have learned a lot from both the staff and the students. The Standard Adult High School Diploma has evolved tremendously due to the contributions of the corrections education staff. I honestly cannot imagine ABE being successful without the DOC. (personal communication, January 4, 2019)

IMPACT OF THE NEW ADULT DIPLOMA ON CURRENT CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

An inspired MCF–Faribault ADP student noted:

Mr. H had pictures on his wall with students that graduated with their adult diploma. Like the Wall of Fame with students' names. You know inspiration can come from the smallest source at the moment. I said to him, my picture is going on your wall, and it wouldn't be for me. It will be to inspire the next person that was labeled an underdog. (Student graduation speaker, personal communication, October 2018)

Unlike the impersonal nature of test-based credentials, the ADP encourages student voice. Whether that voice is developed through narrative writing or through the expression of academic ideas, students begin to see the power of learning and communicating their ideas effectively. Many students send their final writing projects home to show their family that they are making good use of their time inside the fence and to show off the skills they are developing. Some students even fall in love with writing and compose lengthy texts unrelated to their academics.

The shift to a competency-based model has more students personally engaged in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. This model also engenders a greater level of student self-management. For some students, the beginning of the Adult Diploma process seems daunting and nebulous. However, as they complete their learning artifacts, they come to understand that their successes and failures are the result of their own personal investment. Some students sit quietly in class for a few weeks, uncertain if they are going to give an effort. However, as their peers complete one competency area and move to another, the sea of faces changes. Even those who were once hesitant begin to see that they, too, can make progress.

As a result of ADP, the rigor of instruction has increased for all students. Student work is more in-line with college and career readiness whether they earn an Adult Diploma or pass the GED® tests. Students are applying skills across subjects and stronger critical thinkers are emerging.

All students have the opportunity to develop their personal pathway plan and identify their skills through self-assessment, which leads to setting appropriate goals for themselves. DOC has added the Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS) at all sites so that learners have access to career exploration, self-assessments, and various interest surveys (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). This additional resource has supplemented the original Game Plan course.

ADP students are becoming better learners. With guidance and advising from the teachers and administrators, they are achieving their goals at their own pace and feeling very proud of their successes. They are overcoming the struggles of writing a full-page essay, understanding how to use mathematical skills in real-world contexts, gaining digital literacy skills, and preparing for careers by practicing personal skills such as self-management, problem-solving, and navigating systems. A testimonial to the depth of learning came from an ADP student:

We were able to understand and explain that our roller coaster had a 56-inch rise, 7-inch run, and that it takes the marble 4.22 seconds to move from top to bottom. That's a speed of 1.9 inches per second. This project was motivating and challenging. (Unnamed student, personal communication, December 2018)

Teachers who work in this program understand how to integrate CCR Standards into their instruction and they are more motivated to create lessons that excite their learners. Ongoing support with MDE and DOC for ADP includes:

- An enormous amount of sharing of resources through the quarterly Adult Diploma Working Groups;
- A peer review process that lets local diploma staff from other ABE programs help evaluate student portfolios; and
- The Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma Schoology Group.

A ROADMAP FOR NATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION?

The need and the impact of the ADP for corrections is best summed up by this student who was selected as the featured student speaker at a January 2017 graduation ceremony:

I'm 42 years old. I never thought I could ever get my high school diploma—because of my disabilities and because of what other people told me about myself. This is not ordinary, but that's because I am not ordinary. Other people said I would never grow up to be anything. Nobody expected me to be able to do this. But I did. Getting my high school diploma was one of the biggest challenges in my life. It was hard. Algebra is hard. But throughout this challenge I learned to face my biggest fears and to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles. There were times I almost gave up, and I said it wasn't worth it. But I wanted more for my life. I knew I deserved more for my life. And because I didn't give up and because I stopped listening to those voices that said I couldn't do it, I am a success. I am what education should be about! (Student graduation speaker, personal communication)

The State of Minnesota's accomplishment in developing the Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma as a viable, relevant, and andragogically sound secondary credential option was truly visionary. It has become a successful fit for the DOC, a game changer in terms of preparing offender students for college and careers. We see continued expansion of the ADP in the future for Minnesota's correctional facility education programs as well as for other adult basic education programs in the state. Is there reason to think that this model could work well in other states, both in prison and community adult education settings? We think so! ☘

Brad Hasskamp is the Adult Secondary Credential and Education Policy Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Education. He works with the state’s Standard Adult High School Diploma, high school equivalency testing, and ABE policy. He earned a Master of Arts in Public Affairs from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Adam Kuehnel is a literacy instructor with the Minnesota Department of Corrections. His work in argument writing, narrative writing, and critical thinking helped set the stage for the DOC’s implementation of and contributions to the Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma Program. He enjoys presenting his curriculum innovations in adult literacy at local and state ABE conferences.

Theresa Luther-Dolan is the Transition to Post-Secondary and Career coordinator with the MN Department of Corrections. Her 25 years in the ABE field includes program management, GED® Examiner, workforce development counselor, and presenter at state and national conferences. She is currently a Regional ABE Transitions Coordinator for MN Department of Education.

Nancy Rosman is the Education Director at the Minnesota Department of Corrections’ adult correctional facility in Faribault, Minnesota, a 2,000-man medium custody level facility. Ms. Rosman has over thirty years of educational experiences and licensure as a superintendent, principal and special education director. Her passion for education inspires others to examine and redefine what public education can be.

George Kimball is the Director of Adult Education with the Minnesota Department of Corrections. He oversees the Department’s adult basic education program which serves over 4,000 inmate students annually. In his career he has served as a high school teacher/coach, assistant principal, and, most recently, 18 years as a correctional education supervisor/manager.

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TABLE 1— THE MINNESOTA STANDARD ADULT DIPLOMA DOMAINS AND COMPETENCY AREAS

Domain	Competency Area
English Language Arts	Reading Writing Language Speaking and Listening
Mathematics	Number Sense Algebra Geometry and Measurement Data, Statistics, and Probability
Science	Nature of Science and Engineering Life Science Physical Science Earth and Space Science
Social Studies	Economics History Geography U.S. Government
Employability and Career Awareness	Digital Literacy Self-Management Developing a Future Pathway Navigating Systems

RELEASE PACKAGE—A TOOL TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM?

Marit Runyon

Arizona Department of Corrections

The focus of this article is to discuss how partners inside the prison system and outside, in the community, can work together to develop a release package that will help returning citizens to continue their education and career development upon release from incarceration, to prevent these individuals from recommitting a crime. We believe a comprehensive release package is a critical component in the transition from being incarcerated to becoming a successful student and employed citizen with reduced risk of returning to prison. Could it be a tool to reduce recidivism?

Talking to incarcerated males, Correctional Officers (COs), Correctional Education Program staff, and business partners gives us some ideas about what the content in a Release Package may be. Release planning in Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) begins at intake and ends upon release. This study is based on information gathered while working on a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant, which was awarded to ADC Florence Adult Education, by Arizona Department of Education (ADE) for the period of 2017-2020. We use a Reentry Education Model as presented by the U.S. Department of Education, which puts education programming in connection with the community infrastructure. ADC Florence North Unit collaborates with community supervisors to assure returning citizens achieve long-term, high quality employment in a desired occupation.

RELEASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Corrections programs in Arizona use the Release Management System (RMS) to determine release dates and complete release planning. Most prisoners are released at 85% of their complete sentencing time if they have attended mandatory literacy classes and have a home address to go to. If not, they will be released on parole at 100% of served time. Parole offers shelter locations and halfway housing to these individuals. Some inmates refuse to sign the release plan, perhaps because they don't want ADC to have any connection to their release address.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS' RELEASE PLANS

Three to five months prior to release, correctional officers (COs) meet with the inmates to complete the RMS' *My Personal Release Plan*. They check if the inmates have a social security card, driver's license/ID, birth certificate, and resume, and they ask what the returning citizens plan to do to get housing and employment. They ask questions regarding budgeting, financial situation, substance abuse, and relapse prevention. Correctional staff creates a *Transition Crisis Plan* and provides community referrals as needed. Part of this plan is to make a list of phone numbers and contact information the individuals can use and consider steps to find support in the first week(s) of release. All inmates are released with an ID which is good for the first 30 days.

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY/ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION *MERGING TWO WORLDS*

ADC Florence North Unit offers a variety of work and self-improvement programs that support inmates

transitioning between the prison and the community. The COs utilize the comprehensive material called *Merging Two Worlds (M2W)*. The entire material is available for free to anyone (Arizona Department of Corrections, n.d.).

M2W is a transition/career planning curriculum with strategies for a successful transition from the prison to the community by means of education. The student materials contain an assessment package, including numerous forms that inmates complete. Students also create an Individual Learning Plan to help them reflect on future choices. M2W offers material for the COs/facilitators with lessons and resources to use individually or in groups. This material encourages the incarcerated individuals to follow instructions from probation/parole and to get transcripts from previously attended schools. The inmates fill out a *Student Screening Report* which determines social, behavioral, psychomotor, communication, and language skills; academic and cognitive progress; general hygiene; and hearing or learning problems. The inmates can fill out forms to request their educational records as well.

Men serving time in ADC Florence North Unit are offered (or assigned to) a variety of self-improvement programs when they have approximately 6 months left to serve. In addition to M2W there are programs like *Thinking for a Change*, substance abuse programs, programs to develop skills for successful living, faith-based programs, and peer education. Correctional staff and any other ADC staff with inmate contact continuously model and respond with positive thinking and behaviors to help break criminal ways of thinking and behaving.

ADC Florence North Unit is the least restrictive unit in ADC Florence and the incarcerated population is allowed to move around the buildings and yards inside the unit. They have access to a shop, barber, phone booths, library, Hope information center, six classrooms, a gym, and areas for sports and arts-and-crafts. Incentives are given to inmates assessed with lowest risks. They may be offered jobs outside the unit or in the community. Arizona Correctional Industries hires incarcerated individuals statewide to work in a variety of positions, including as porters, in maintenance, as kitchen helpers, or as mechanics.

ADC has intergovernmental agreements with many local cities and towns, with Whitfield Nursery, Wild Land Fire Crew, Pinal County Streets, Casa Grande Sanitation, Landfill, Parks and Recreation, Coolidge Wastewater, Unified Schools, and with Central Arizona College Campus. Hired inmates in ADC Florence North Unit work as porters in all our buildings. The work crews take care of maintenance and repairs and work as electricians, HVAC, plumbers, carpenters, and welders and do automotive work. Most classrooms have inmate Teacher's Assistants (TAs) who help other incarcerated students to succeed academically.

WIOA, FLORENCE, NORTH UNIT, ADULT BASIC EDUCATION, INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND TRAINING, ARIZONA CAREER INFORMATION SYSTEM ECAP-A AND ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS

The current ADC, Florence North Unit WIOA Program recidivism rate is 5%. We had 43 students/inmates who were released in the spring of 2018 and two of them returned with new charges. This does not include 60 inmates who started education but were separated from North Unit because they were transferred to other units to fill private prison beds or due to behavioral or medical problems. The COs assign students to ADC Success Academy, Adult Basic Education in functional literacy, or the Mandatory class working to achieve an 8th grade level and to continue until GED® graduation. Inmates/students can sign up for postsecondary studies either at the unit or via correspondence classes. The North Unit houses less than 1,000 inmates and there is a plan to reduce the population. At this time, between 100 and 135 inmates are assigned to education and have been offered the opportunity to register with the WIOA program. They are enrolled in four classrooms in North Unit with morning and afternoon classes. The program uses digital curriculum: A+ Courseware and Reading

Horizons. The students are not allowed online access except during TABE 11/12 testing when they have online access in a locked browser.

The WIOA project, along with academic instruction, provides the students with career planning using Education Career Action Plan for adults (ECAP-A). This is a tool to help students learn about their own interests and skills and set a career outcome. The students will learn about their education and skills gaps and how they can qualify for the employment they are looking for. ADE requires WIOA grantees to work closely with Arizona@Work and develop partnership with the Pinal County Local Workforce Board to align their education and skills training to the career pathways needed by local businesses. ADE also requires the ADC Florence WIOA project to create Integrated Education and Training (IET) to offer specialized certifications for interested students, in addition to basic adult education. The ADC Florence WIOA program plans to get qualified staff who can train our students in basic NCCER Construction skills and HVAC skills starting in a year's time. ADC is also working to implement Arizona Career Readiness Credential training for interested students/inmates. This is a soft skills certification promoted in Arizona to teach basic requirements for employees to succeed in new job positions (Arizona@Work, 2016).

The WIOA Career Coordinator tracks ECAP-A progress and conducts individual one-on-one conversations to screen the students and create an *Education & Employment Plan* for each individual. The coordinator asks open questions to get an overview of how the student is doing and how each student can take advantage of the various programs and information offered, and provides information on how to succeed with top priorities. Each inmate receives a one-page handout with the address of all Arizona@Work One-Stop Centers in Arizona. The coordinator circles the office(s) near to where each inmate will be located upon release and describes all the services they may qualify for. They receive information about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit companies can get to hire ex-felons and about felon-friendly companies, as well as an example of how to answer questions about having committed a crime. The students are asked; "Are you at risk of recommitting a crime?" and have a conversation about what got the individual in trouble. A high percentage of the inmates receive psychotropic medication and behavioral health services. They are released with Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System benefits, a referral to a new behavioral health provider, and medication for the first 30 days. Some attend Alcoholic Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and/or substance abuse trainings. After the initial interview, the coordinator provides individualized information regarding education, jobs, or anything else that the inmate may need. All students receive handouts printed from O*NET online (see: www.onetonline.org) in the occupational area they request, listing various jobs in the occupation, and another page with detailed information regarding job tasks, skills needed, education needs, job trends, salaries, and more. If a student states that he wants to start a small barber shop, for example, we may Google this and look for an article with steps on how to start. If another student asks if he can continue working in real estate as an ex-felon, the question will be answered using online searches. Many of the inmates owe past-due traffic fines and can't have their driver's license reinstated. They get a copy of a document titled "CAP—Compliance Assistance Program." Phoenix Municipal Court can help them by creating a payment plan, and it often reduces pending charges. Students can also receive a list of halfway houses and reentry programs in the community.

ADC, SECOND CHANCE CENTERS, AND DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY/ARIZONA@WORK

The current recidivism rate for Arizona state prisoners is around 40%. Different methods for calculating recidivism will not be discussed. Per ADC Director Charles L. Ryan's *Strategic Plan—FY 2018-2022*, our vision is safer communities through effective corrections, and the goal is to reduce recidivism by 25% in 10 years. There are 9,500 full-time employees working in Arizona State Prison to secure and administer programs to about 42,000 incarcerated individuals statewide. This costs more than \$1 billion a year. It is a challenge in part due to continuously high staff vacancy rates.

ADC’s internal reentry resource center has topics ranging from affordable health care and dental services to articles about tattoo removal and budgeting. Reentry planning begins upon reception at ADC Phoenix Alhambra center, with an assessment of criminal risk factors. If these risks are addressed effectively, it will increase the likelihood of successful integration in the community and reduce the probability of recidivism.

ADC and the Department of Economic Security (DES) have developed “Second Chance Centers” in Lewis, Tucson, and Perryville that assist inmates in bridging the gaps between the prison and the outside world in a 9-week long intensive program. The Second Chance Centers are focused on preparing inmates for employment during the last sixty days prior to an inmate’s release from prison. Per the office of the Arizona Governor, the Second Chance Centers served 817 inmates in 2017–2018. Of these individuals, 444 obtained gainful employment upon release (Office of the Arizona Governor, 2019). The Second Chance program is described as a Statewide Recidivism Reduction Program. No formal report has been published regarding their current recidivism rate.

There are similarities and differences between the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Second Chance Act. Both programs address individuals with barriers to getting employment and promote community partnership. In Arizona, the WIOA education and employment grants are directed by ADE, while DES directs the Second Chance grants. A variety of customers are eligible for the WIOA efforts, while only incarcerated individuals qualify for the Second Chance Act. The ADE WIOA programs don’t have the limited time period to work with. Adult basic education can take much longer than 9 weeks, and will continue to follow the individuals after release, with statistics on employment immediately and after 6 months. Both programs arrange job fairs in the prison. The Second Chance program, more than WIOA, has businesses present in the prison at their re-entry centers. The WIOA program has limited opportunity to bring businesses to the classrooms.

Each unit creates their own “Release Packages” the inmates bring with them at release. WIOA provides the ECAP-A material, including resumes and other supportive information, which the students take home at release. This study cannot measure the impact of a Release Package and if it is a tool to reduce recidivism or answer the initial question. Rather, the article is meant as a starting point for a discussion, as a pilot study to explore the topic. ☞

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN PRISONS

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ABSTRACT

In 2016, the Office of Correctional Education in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation embarked on a process of implementing professional learning communities (PLCs) in all 35 California state prisons. The American Institutes for Research provided professional development and consulting on the PLC process. Through working to implement the building blocks of PLCs in a correctional setting, lessons were learned about how to address some of the particularities of the prison environment. This article describes some of the issues and strategies surrounding time and space for meetings, standards, engaging all staff, and distributive leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In 2016 the American Institutes for Research (AIR¹) teamed up with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Office of Correctional Education (OCE²) to work toward improving equity in education across California's state prison system, which serves between 48,000 and 52,000 students daily. OCE envisioned a system in which a student would receive the same high-quality education in any of the 35 state prisons that offer education services. When an inmate was transferred from one institution to another, OCE sought to ensure that their educational program could be continued at the same level and quality. Ninety-seven percent of inmates will be returning to life on the outside at some point, with a need to earn a sustainable wage and to avoid returning to prison. Education is a critical path to assisting these returning citizens in making a living wage, a proven component in reducing recidivism (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013).

To focus on increasing equity for all inmates receiving education services, OCE created the Student Success Initiative. This initiative took a three-pronged approach to professional development: (1) Transformative Correctional Communication—an approach OCE developed to improve communication with students in a correctional environment; (2) data-driven decision-making specific to the types of instructional assessments

1 From this point forward, AIR refers to AIR staff who were part of this project.

2 From this point forward, OCE refers to OCE staff who were part of this project.

used within CDCR schools; and (3) implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) statewide. AIR was brought in to provide professional development for staff and to support the PLC process. Using the PLC model, the goal of the training was to increase student learning outcomes, extend collaboration among staff, and provide educational equity across the system.

THE CALIFORNIA PRISON EDUCATION SYSTEM

The California prison system is large, housing approximately 128,000 inmates in 2018, which accounts for 9% of all state prison inmates in the United States. About 5,000 California inmates participate in adult education programs. As new inmates arrive from county detention centers, or are sentenced by the courts, those with a demonstrated academic or career technical need are assigned to education. Fifty-two percent of these inmates are in adult basic education, 17% of students are taking college courses either on site or via distance learning, 16% are taking career and technical education (CTE) classes, and 15% are taking high school equivalency or high school diploma classes.

As of August 2018, CDCR employed 100 administrators, 720 academic teachers, 304 CTE teachers, 47 physical education teachers, 173 library staff, 100 field support staff, 36 television specialists, and 41 education staff at the state headquarters. OCE was no stranger to PLCs prior to this project. Quite a few CDCR schools across the state had begun the PLC implementation process in the years leading up to the project. OCE's prior PLC work was a critical asset to the initiative, especially considering the overall size of the prison system.

THE PLC MODEL FOR PRISON EDUCATION

The PLC model was pioneered by DuFour and Eaker (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2016) and focuses on four critical questions:

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. How will we know if they have learned?
3. What will we do if they don't learn?
4. What will we do if they already know it?

Teachers work together in job-alike groups to create and share common formative assessments, look at their assessment and outcome data together, and determine together how to address areas where students have not mastered competencies by sharing lessons and instructional strategies. DuFour and Eaker's PLC model suggests that the following seven building blocks are needed in order for a PLC to be sustainable:

1. Shared mission, vision, values, and goals
2. Collaborative teams, essential standards, and use of common formative assessments
3. Distributive leadership
4. Collective inquiry
5. Action orientation
6. Analysis of learning gains
7. Results orientation and continuous improvement

Professional learning communities are not a new concept, having originated within K–12 education in the 1960s. What is new is the application of the concept in a prison setting. Prison education programs have some unique characteristics that require creative thinking. Collaboration can be a challenge in any education setting, but in prisons there are additional barriers. For example, moving from one yard to another for a meeting may require permissions, paperwork, and transportation. Within many prisons, the inability of inmate students

to move between locations and the various sign-in and sign-out security processes required for staff to move between yards means each separate yard in a prison operates like a separate, small school. However, because the PLC process has been shown to be effective in increasing student learning (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006), OCE has made a serious commitment to that goal.

There are also some unique barriers to finding the time to meet in a prison setting. Within CDCR, there are no substitute teacher positions, so when teachers are not present in their classrooms, classes must be canceled. Because CDCR assigns inmates to education classes and custody personnel coverage is planned based on anticipated inmate programming, when meetings interrupt regularly scheduled classes, custody coverage is affected and inmates are left with no other planned activities. Understandably, administrators are sometimes reluctant to cancel class time in favor of meetings or professional development because of the impact on the rest of the institution. However, OCE has designated specific times for staff meetings and professional development, such as the first Wednesday of every month, and institutions are encouraged to dedicate some of that time to PLC meetings (in addition to other times during the month).

The PLC process relies on a commitment to educational standards. Prior to the current project, OCE had already designated the College and Career Readiness Standards as the standards that instructors would adhere to, and appropriate textbooks had been purchased. But because of prison practices and priorities that are focused more on safety, security, and operational concerns than on classroom instruction, and due to insufficient numbers of educational administrators at certain times, it was a challenge to provide observation and coaching of instructional staff. The PLC training was designed to develop instructional leaders at each site who could help lead the collaborative process of collecting formative data on student learning and focusing instruction on the areas of need. A focus on standards and the evaluation of learning in relation to standards is a critical part of the PLC approach. Part of the PLC training provided by AIR introduced the College and Career Readiness Standards as well as strategies for unpacking and implementing the standards and for assessing learning with the standards framework. Work with the standards supports equity by creating common expectations for each course and level regardless of location.

ENGAGING ALL STAFF

The goal of the PLC training project was to engage all staff in a collaborative process focused on student learning outcomes through direct interaction and participation with teams or via support. In addition to teachers, the trainers focused on engaging librarians, coaches, TV specialists, and support staff. Traditionally, people in these roles did not see themselves as part of the instructional process. The library staff provide an example of this. Where traditional K–12 education often sees the library as the center of any successful school, CDCR libraries vary between those institutions where the library functions as a law library where inmates are provided court-mandated access to legal materials, and those where libraries are recreational and have book clubs, poetry readings, and other supportive services. OCE hosts leadership councils for the various job groups, including librarians, and invited AIR staff to attend these meetings and discuss ways that would make sense to include participants in the PLC process. AIR staff met with both the Library Leadership Council and a statewide meeting of library staff. In these meetings, librarians explained why they felt excluded from the PLC meetings and brainstormed ways in which they could work more closely with the teachers. Suggestions included finding out what textbooks were being used and ordering copies for the library, helping inmates research topics they were studying in class, providing activities like puzzles and a “problem of the day” in support of topics being covered in class, bringing book carts to the classes, and providing tours of the library for both learners and teachers. Not all of these ideas could be immediately implemented, but initiating the conversation about what

was possible became a positive first step. Developing libraries and librarians as important allies in academic and career technical education growth continues to be a priority for OCE.

In meetings with the CTE Leadership Council, CTE teachers shared ideas about how basic skills instruction could support CTE goals, and vice versa. CTE teachers were particularly interested in addressing the deficits some of their students had in basic reading and math, as improving these skills would help inmates pass the national certification exams in the various trades. They proposed having joint PLC meetings with the academic teachers and hoped for regional professional development days in order to hear from programs at other institutions about how they address some of the same challenges. With 21 different CTE programs available at different sites ranging from construction trades to computer coding, bridging this gap remains a priority. Administrators from OCE report that the experiences and perceptions of the AIR team are helping them to plan more inclusive professional development and to develop integrated education and training models where academic support is offered for CTE students through blended approaches to class design.

DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Distributive leadership is an important component of PLCs. It means that all members of the community have a shared commitment and mutual responsibility to identify essential standards, develop curriculum and assessments, and make collective, data-driven decisions geared toward improving student learning outcomes. Administrators are challenged to implement both tight and loose control; for example, they require all staff to participate in the PLC while allowing instructional decisions to be made by the group. This is a challenge for any school administrator, but especially so in a correctional setting where the structure—and main function—of prisons is a paramilitary, “vertical” structure that emphasizes titles and roles that are “top down” and where directives are given and compliance is expected. In addition, within CDCR, the hiring authority for principals is the warden rather than the OCE administration, which means that principals are pulled between the necessary demands of custody for security and safety and the educational requirements of collaboration and shared decision making.

Even given these competing priorities, there were many schools in which the administrative staff excelled at distributive leadership and supporting the PLC process. Some principals put a lot of effort into building trust among their team members. One principal conducted a feedback activity with staff that ended up revealing that some of the team-building efforts had actually further isolated staff from one another, which was the opposite of the intended effect. The development of the PLC process is not without risks and growing pains.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Implementing the PLC process in prison education precipitates a major cultural shift for all involved, and it does not happen quickly. Through the Student Success Initiative, teams from all 35 institutions spent four days in training with colleagues in their regions and had opportunities to implement goals that they developed for themselves between sessions. Goals ranged from holding a PLC meeting, agreeing on group norms, engaging in at least one team-building activity, or unpacking a standard, to creating and administering a common formative assessment and sharing assessment data. Sometimes the goals were met in the two months between training sessions and sometimes they were not, as many other priorities and requirements intervened. Regardless, teams continued to revise and reconfigure their goals and to persevere in meeting them.

OCE plans to continue supporting the process by providing PLC coaching at the institution and even classroom level. They are currently implementing a Distinguished Schools program in which schools apply for

this distinction by meeting a set of requirements, of which effective PLC functioning is an integral part. Six academic coaches have been hired to cover the three regions of the state. Among other things, these coaches will support education staff in their PLC endeavors. These steps reflect continuing support for the PLC process and a commitment to provide whatever support is needed until professional learning communities become part of each school's culture and are not affected by staff changes due to transfers, retirement, and attrition. ☘

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MICRONOVELS: AN ELEGANTLY SIMPLE APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

Finding materials that engage adult learners in meaningful ways is an irksome task, especially when the academic needs of a beginning literacy classroom are incredibly diverse. Off-the-shelf curriculum often fails to meet instructional needs as the materials are either too simple or too disconnected from targeted learning goals. As a result, teachers find themselves in the search for worthwhile materials that engage learners in deep investigations of text while addressing mastery of College and Career Readiness (CCRS) content standards. In this instructional practice analysis, the author, a beginning level literacy teacher with the Minnesota Department of Corrections, explores the method of teaching single-sentence MicroNovels with the purpose of promoting beginning literacy students' access to and deeper understanding of print text.

Etched into the walls of an architecture school is an ideology that reminds the aspiring Louis Sullivans and Zaha Hadids to make their designs simple so that they can be complex. Often times, Meis van der Rohe's designs, like the Farnsworth House and the Illinois Institute of Technology's Crown Hall (Appendix A), are championed as definitive examples of this simple-complex ideology with their smooth surfaces, masterful details, and thoughtful choreography of human movement. Truly, in the simplicity of van der Rohe's structures and materials, his designs evoke complex engagements. Such powerful engagements with the built environment stir fledgling architects to make the most of every line and detail they place on paper.

How about corrections education? Is there something in this simple-complex ideology that speaks to a literacy instructor's efforts in designing and implementing relevant, best practice strategies for incarcerated adult learners? Let it be simple so that it can be complex. This article showcases one such condensed instructional strategy, the use of MicroNovels for beginning literacy development.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Though I was not a newcomer to teaching adults when I transitioned into my correctional facility's beginning literacy program¹, my first month of teaching in that setting was wrought with great professional frustration. With my previous experience in teaching at the high school equivalency level, I fell victim to the teacher trap that all I needed to do at the beginning level was reduce the level of difficulty, speak a little slower, smile more often, and provide more time for independent work. However, this mindset led me to distributing ineffective materials that failed to satisfy the instructional needs of my students, who were stuck beside me in

1 Students tested below grade level equivalent 4.4 on the TABE form E or M.

a quagmire of unending busy work. Even worse, I was failing to provide differentiated opportunities for each student to learn at his own pace and to demonstrate his knowledge of CCRS competencies at his own level.

In my teacher's heart, I knew that what I wanted was a beginning literacy, instructional strategy that engendered a variety of higher order thinking skills (Anderson et al., 2001), and that all learners could access, regardless of their literacy experience and language abilities. In essence, what I wanted was a one-size-fits-all, self-differentiating curriculum that engaged the diverse needs of all my learners on their first day of class—English learners (EL) and the English speakers alike. I grappled with the "Let it be simple so that it can be complex" ideology, and in that grappling, I questioned why it was that I continued to engage my students—willy-nilly—ad nauseam—ennui—in reading lengthy texts independently if they neither understood the basic principles of text structure and idea development (CCRS Reading Anchor 5) nor the effective use of evidence to answer text-dependent questions. There was more to this struggle than simply preparing my students for their next Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment. I feared if my students were not taught the foundations of critical reading and critical thinking, they would be no better upon their release from the facility than when they entered.

Then, after an excruciating morning of shrugged shoulders, blank-stares, and ill-fated instruction, I sat in the quiet of an empty classroom and whispered to myself, "If my students struggle to translate a lengthy passage between languages, and if my students struggle to remember everything that is developed in a lengthy passage, then I should teach radically short passages and teach them to a deeper level of understanding." This syllogistic statement was the foundation of the "Let it be simple so that it can be complex" curriculum I was seeking. It was at that moment that the concept of MicroNovels was born.

DESIGNING A SIMPLE STRATEGY

On the drawing board, a MicroNovel is a single-sentence story that is chock-full of direct analysis details, plot elements, character development, and inference potential; a single sentence to read, translate, and investigate; a single sentence from which a myriad of CCRS-aligned, text-dependent, evidence-based questions can be framed; and a single sentence that embraces the CCRS's key shifts of text complexity, use of evidence, and development of knowledge. I questioned whether this condensed approach (Hadley, Eisenwine, & Sanders, 2005) could really be that simple, and whether it could really provide me with the kind of upward-literacy complexity I desired?

Having taught less-than-effective, off-the-shelf materials for quite some time, I knew that whatever I presented in a MicroNovel had to be interesting, challenging, and even a little mysterious—with awkwardly familiar characters, places, and events that dwell somewhere on the meandering path between Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon* and Stephen King's *Castle Rock*—stopping in *Spoon River* to ask Edgar Lee Masters for directions. If I presented warm little stories about puppies and their trip to the park, my experiment would result in failure because those kinds of stories simply do not resonate with my adult learners, and not just because they are incarcerated. But, if I presented an intriguing story about a fully-freighted mosquito's fatal attraction to the purple aura of an electric bug zapper, I might be able to get their attention. I find that adult learners value texts that contain a generous blend of humor, sensory details, thrill, and shock in order to keep them engaged. And, in order to put ten pounds of description in a five-pound sentence, I added em dash details to give each sentence a little extra oomph. Two governing equations became apparent in my explorations: (1) simple = complex, and (2) humor + sensory details + thrill + shock = engagement.

Likewise, I knew the text-dependent questions I presented had to be in the likeness and logic of what students would encounter on their next TABE assessment, otherwise a student would return from a testing

session and angrily announce to the rest of the class, “Listen up! Nothing he is teaching us is on the test!” Try restoring your teacher cred after that accusation! I scoured my guaranteed-to-improve, self-help test materials, identified the types of questions they asked, and then considered how I could recreate their likeness and logic by replacing key ideas with ideas that were relevant to one of my stories. To strengthen this concept, I used the CCRS Reading and Language competencies as question stems to develop scaffolded questions that drew students to higher order thinking skills (Anderson, et al, 2001; Fisher & Frey, 2007), and gave direction to their exploration (Table 1).

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

When I handed out my first MicroNovel, *Pete’s Thumb*, my students were leery of being guinea pigs in yet another one of my curriculum experiments. However, when I gave them the brief that this was a single-sentence story about a man who might have cut off his thumb on a table saw, they leaned forward in their desks with a bit of curiosity. I explained the process of how I would read aloud/Think Aloud (Song, 1998) through the story while the students whisper-read in time with me, developed a basic understanding of the story, and circled unfamiliar words. Then, I would ask for two volunteers to read the story aloud: the first volunteer to simply read the story aloud while we all followed along, fingers on words; the second volunteer to read the story aloud while everybody listened with eyes closed. From there, and without looking at the story, we would discuss what we remembered and collaborate our ideas in a graphic organizer. Through multiple close readings and discussions, I hoped students would engage and understand the text at a deeper level (Fisher & Frey, 2007).

Once everybody understood the process, I read *Pete’s Thumb*:

They were nearly to the hospital’s emergency entrance when Pete looked at the blood-soaked towel—wrapped around the place where his thumb had been—and suddenly realized, in his terrified haste, he had left the table saw running in the garage.

Right away there was discussion. “So, Pete cut off his thumb? Is this a true story?” It was difficult not to respond as I could hear their excitement, but I reminded the students that we still had to read through the text two more times before we would discuss our ideas collectively. The class quieted down, and the two volunteers read through the text. I could have heard a pin drop.

With our papers facing down, we went through the room and each student shared a detail he remembered. Everything was written on the board as part of our evidence collecting process. When we had exhausted our ideas, I handed out a series of open-ended, text-dependent questions in order to informally assess their understanding of the text against the evidence they had gathered (Appendix B). Again, the questions were in the likeness and logic of those they might encounter on benchmarking and credentialing assessments, and they were likewise aligned to state-adopted content standards (Fisher & Frey, 2007). I gave the students ten minutes to work through the questions independently and explained they would have five additional minutes to collaborate with a partner. Pencils went to work. A second pin dropped.

I walked around the room and monitored progress. I was amazed by my students’ engagement in the activity. As the first ten minutes drew to a close, I opened the opportunity for the students to collaborate with each other. It was then that I realized I had found that which I had been seeking. The simple text was fertile ground for complex discussions. Students were even using my investigative rhetoric, “Where do you see that in the story? Where is the evidence?” The conversations were so poignant and energized that we sailed past the planned five-minute collaboration time, and per the students’ persistence, I faux-reluctantly agreed to another five minutes of collaboration time. How could I resist? After all, I was watching the CCRS-Reading, Language,

and Speaking & Listening standards come to life. It was only when more and more questions required my “learned professional opinion” that we returned to whole-class discussion.

“Let’s take a look at the first question: Who are the characters?” I asked.

“Pete,” the class answered unanimously and with certainty.

“Anybody else?” I asked.

“Pete’s wife,” a student responded. Perhaps he was reflecting on his own personal experience with a table saw and subsequent trip to the hospital.

“Can you show me in the text where Pete’s wife is mentioned?” I was pleased to hear other students point out that neither Pete’s wife nor any other characters were specifically mentioned. We went through the litany of possible answers (doctors, nurses, people driving on the road, etc...), but each response was met with the same retort, “Can you show me in the text where “that” is stated?”

Then, from somewhere in the back of the room, a hesitant voice spoke up, “Well, it does say, ‘They...,’ but we do not know who the ‘They...’ is.” Confetti fell from the ceiling and great ah-ha’s were had by all. We discussed “They...” and its use as evidence—an indeterminate plural, subjective pronoun.

“Now, for question number two: Where are the characters?”

“In the garage...in a car...in an ambulance...on the bus...on the way to the hospital...at the emergency entrance.” The answers came steadily, but it was clear there was a bit more hesitance because the students knew they would have to prove their answers through direct evidence from the text. Then, another voice spoke up, this time with confidence, “We do not know where they are. The only thing we know is that they are nearly to the hospital’s emergency entrance.” My students were catching on, and with each question, they were learning what it meant to engage the text at a deeper level.

When teaching this same passage to high school equivalency students, there was an amazing—almost mathematical—discussion regarding the word nearly. Students were able to identify that nearly would have different meanings based on how far Pete had to travel when he began his journey to the hospital (CCRS-L:5). If he lived in the hinterlands of the world, nearly could still be a few hundred miles away; if he lived in the surrounding countryside, nearly could still be a few miles away; if he lived across the street from the hospital, nearly might be the last few yards of ramp leading up to the hospital’s emergency entrance.

In experimenting with MicroNovels in my facility’s various literacy programs, I have found that text-dependent questions become self-differentiating depending on the demands/abilities of the classroom. While my beginning literacy students focus on gathering evidence and direct text-analysis, high school equivalency students engage in complex discussions about the evidence that is argued from silence (CCRS Reading Anchor 1). For example, they drew evidence-based conclusions about how Pete obtained the towel to wrap around his hand. Did “They” give him the towel? Likewise, they questioned why it suddenly became so important that he remembered he had left the table saw running. Was he afraid that one of his children might touch the saw? Or was he afraid that the neighborhood cat would wonder into the garage? But, where are “child” or “cat” mentioned in the text? One student arrived at the conclusion that we do not even know if Pete cut off his thumb as the result of a table-saw accident, or if his thumb was already missing and a new wound was inflicted on his hand. Based on a strict interpretation of the text and the lack of supporting evidence, he was correct.

I have found that teaching how some questions do not have answers is equally as effective as teaching how some questions have obvious answers. Teasing the text analysis a little deeper, I posed the question: “What color is Pete’s towel?” Because our students are allowed to use their white, state-issued towels as scarves in

the winter months, most of the students initially claimed that Pete’s towel was white. However, the classroom tide quickly reversed and students identified that there is not enough evidence to support that, or any, answer. They all agreed, though, that regardless of the towel’s initial color, it was now soaked in red. Teaching that some questions do not have enough supporting evidence requires the students to draw conclusions and make inferences based on the evidence that does exist (CCRS Reading Anchor 1). The result is a strengthened understanding of the text.

I knew I had caught my students’ interest when they asked if we would be doing any more of these “... story things.” Calmly, as if everything was planned out and in ready status, I assured them we would, but then I spent the next several lunch periods frantically trying to tap into that fold in my brain where I had found *Pete’s Thumb*.

Over the course of a few weeks, I developed twenty MicroNovels, some of which were finished and distributed to students, others of which are still on my digital drawing board (Appendix D). I kept pushing MicroNovel ideas to the limits of the simple-complex paradigm. After each exercise, I collected the student responses and assessed their level of understanding. If too many students missed a question, I considered either re-teaching the likeness and logic of the question or rewording the question to be more approachable. The perpetual revision process of each MicroNovel is responsive to the diverse needs of the students and to a stronger alignment to the CCRS’s key shifts. Because of their simplicity, I find that MicroNovels fold nicely into all of those great reading strategies we have collected over the years but do not know how to incorporate into our instruction. Let it be simple so that it can be complex.

PROCESS REVISION

In subsequent iterations of MicroNovels, I focused on an even deeper engagement of the text via a collaborative Think Aloud (Song, 1998), and structured note-taking, rather than focusing on short-answer written responses. Additionally, in an effort to discuss grammar and the rules of writing, I made three grammatical errors in the text in the manner of traditional Daily Oral Language (CCRS Language Anchor 2). Prior to distributing the story, I projected a PowerPoint slide of *High Wire Publicity* (Appendix C), which is a story about a desperate author’s high-wire publicity stunt gone awry. The students followed along as I conducted a Think Aloud and made scribble notes on the board about questions I had, interesting words I encountered, and cause/effect relationships I connected. When I was done with my Think Aloud, I had two volunteers read through the text while the rest of the class followed along, just as they had done with *Pete’s Thumb*. Then, I shut off the projector and we discussed what we remembered through a student-generated graphic organizer. I was pleased with the level of discussion and the depth of understanding.

With our ideas exhausted, I turned on the projector and asked for volunteers to identify key pieces of evidence in the text: Draw a box around the characters. Circle words that describe. Underline cause and effect relationships. Squiggle-underline words that develop setting. Cloud-circle words that lend themselves to an alternative title. In this manner, there was increased student engagement and evidence-based discussion, especially among EL students and students who struggle with comprehension.

When we completed discussing the details of the story, we explored the three grammatical errors and their suggested revisions. I was sure to make corrections by using the standard editing marks that our high school equivalency program uses so that students develop a working knowledge of how to self-edit and how to make sense of teacher editing marks. Adding the revision component to the MicroNovel framework allowed for a deeper discussion of the same single sentence, and allowed us to venture into CCRS Writing and Language competencies.

CONCLUSION

Let it be simple so that it can be complex. In a corrections educator's daily effort to provide adult learners with meaningful and engaging curriculum, it is a strong practice to focus on depth rather than breadth. Using condensed texts, such as MicroNovels, that are replete with evidence and engaging details, affords beginning level literacy students the opportunity to master the skills of analyzing a text in a manner that yields a high return on teacher investment. Additionally, with regards to teacher investment, the self-differentiating nature of MicroNovels means that teachers can engage a wider range of student abilities through the use of a single activity. Moreover, students develop a greater sense of academic self-efficacy through their successful engagement of a text and participation in classroom discussions. ☞

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TABLE 1—CCR READING [CCR-R] AND LANGUAGE [CCR-L] ANCHORS TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

Cognitive Domain	MicroNovel Question Types
CCR-R:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the main characters? • What evidence shows that Pete was in a hurry to leave the garage? • Where is Pete now?
CCR-R:2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize the story in ten words or less. • If Pete were going to create a safety poster for table saw use, what ideas might he include? Write a slogan or sketch a poster.
CCR-R:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a timeline of five events related to the story, either specific or implied.
CCR-R:4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the phrase terrified haste add to the tone of the story?
CCR-R:5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the following sentence be located in sequence before or after the story? Pete decided he would sneak out to his garage workshop to begin working on a Valentine’s Day gift for his wife.
CCR-R:7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketch a graphic that depicts key elements of the story. Label the key elements.
CCR-L:5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the definition of the word nearly change based on Pete’s initial starting point?

APPENDIX A—MEIS VAN DER ROHE'S SIMPLE/COMPLEX ARCHITECTURE

Image 1: Farnsworth House (Photo courtesy of the author)



Image 2: Crown Hall, Illinois Institute of Technology (Photo collage courtesy of the author)



APPENDIX B—PETE'S THUMB HANDOUT

1.

They were nearly to the hospital's emergency entrance when Pete looked at the blood-soaked towel—wrapped around the place where his thumb had been—and suddenly realized, in his terrified haste, he had left the table saw running in the garage.

Directions: Answer each of the following questions using direct evidence from the story.

1. Who are the characters?

2. Where are the characters now?

3. Summarize the story in ten words or less?

4. Create a timeline of the events related to the story (specific or implied).

5. What does the phrase, *terrified haste*, add to the tone of the story?

APPENDIX B—PETE'S THUMB HANDOUT (CONTINUED)

6. Would the following sentence be located before or after the story? *Pete decided he would sneak out to his garage workshop and begin working on a Valentine's Day gift for his wife.* [] Before [] After Explain your reasoning.

7. How does the definition of the word *nearly* change based on Pete's initial starting point?

8. What is a good title for this story?

9. Draw a picture of this story and label key pieces.

APPENDIX C—HIGH WIRE PUBLICITY HANDOUT

9.

To Pete, traversing a burning tight-rope across the Grand Canyon—while dressed as a giant squirrel—seemed like a catchy publicity stunt to sell his recent book, *The Epic Adventures of an Ambidextrous Suburban Squirrel*, until, that is, he gained the interest of a desperately hungry turkey vulture.

Directions: Answer each of the following questions using direct evidence from the story.

1. Who are the characters?

2. Where does this story take place?

3. Would the following sentence be located before or after the story? *It was then, with his stomach growling and the cupboard shelves empty of even the tiniest morsel, that Pete's eyes chanced upon a picture of the Grand Canyon—taped to the refrigerator—and his thoughts were filled with wide-eyed possibility.* [] Before [] After

Explain your reasoning.

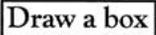
4. How does the phrase *desperately hungry* shape the subsequent events of the story?

5. Summarize the story in ten words or less.

APPENDIX C—HIGH WIRE PUBLICITY HANDOUT (CONTINUED)

6. Create a timeline of the events related to the story (specific or implied).

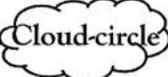
7. What is a good alternative title for this story?

8.  Draw a box around the characters.

9.  Circle words that describe *what kind?*

10. Underline cause and effect relationships.

11. Squiggle-underline words that develop setting.

12.  Cloud-circle words that lend to an alternative title.

APPENDIX D—SAMPLE MICRONOVELS**Pete’s Thumb**

They were nearly to the hospital’s emergency entrance when Pete looked at the blood-soaked towel—wrapped around the place where his thumb had been—and suddenly realized, in his terrified haste, he had left the table saw running in the garage.

Chainsaw Juggler

Though Pete’s father had always boasted of his son’s occupational persistence, after many years of trying to regain his waning confidence, Pete mournfully came to the conclusion that he simply didn’t have the hands for chainsaw juggling anymore.

Drawn to Purple

The mosquito, now fully freighted with a delectable meal of a tender, suburban Schnauzer named Buttercup, felt itself magnetically drawn—like the tide to the moon—one ancient celestial lover to another—to the radiant purple aura of the bug zapper hanging in the hemlock tree above Stanley Schnibble’s prized purple peony garden

High Wire Publicity

To Pete, traversing a burning tight-rope across the Grand Canyon—while dressed as a giant squirrel—seemed like a catchy publicity stunt to sell his recent book, *The Epic Adventures of an Ambidextrous Suburban Squirrel*, until, that is, he gained the interest of a desperately hungry turkey vulture.

SPECIAL EDITION
PRISON LITERACY

REFLECTION

**GROWTH MINDSET VS. FIXED MINDSET IN
CORRECTIONAL ADULT EDUCATION SETTING**

Michelle Candy

North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

ABSTRACT

Many adult students in corrections and other adult learning centers have a fixed mindset. Helping students to learn about a growth mindset can help them to be successful in studying for the GED® exam as well as in other areas of their lives.

NOTHING BUT PLATITUDES

When I started teaching GED® and ABE classes for the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, I had many years of teaching experience, but I had a lot to learn about teaching incarcerated adults. Unlike my international high school students, who were highly motivated to study English in order to gain admission to an American university, I discovered my classes of adults did not want to study or do homework. They were reluctant to take a GED® test, even if it was clear that they had the ability to be successful. They were not motivated.

When students got a less-than-passing score on a GED® test, I heard comments such as, “I failed,” or “I’m too stupid to get this.” My heart sank each time I saw a low score. I struggled to understand the score reports and how to be an effective and motivational teacher. I heard myself uttering lame platitudes, such as, “Maybe you’ll do better next time,” or “You just need to study some more,” or even, “Well, I know you did your best.” Sometimes, I even thought to myself, “Some people are just not good at English, and you may be one of them,” though fortunately I never verbalized this.

INSPIRATION

One weekend, while listening to The TED Radio Hour on my local NPR station, I heard Carol Dweck speaking about her research on growth mindset vs. fixed mindset. The host asked Dweck, “Do you think it’s possible for

adults to . . . retrain themselves to develop more of a growth mindset?” Dweck responded that adults could absolutely retrain their thinking, by learning to “identify their fixed mindset triggers” (Raz, 2016). Because I was not familiar with the terms fixed and growth mindset, I started researching. A fixed mindset is one in which a person believes that he or she has certain strengths and weaknesses and a finite ability in any area. Because of a fixed mindset, many adolescents protect themselves by putting forth a minimum of effort for a class in which they don’t feel they can be successful (Dweck, 2006, p. 58). Upon reflection, I recognized that I, myself, had had a fixed mindset through most of my schooling. Furthermore, I realized I had a fixed mindset in regard to my students’ ability to learn, which only served to reinforce the fixed mindset they already held (Rattan, Good, & Dweck, 2012).

In contrast, a growth mindset is, “based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts” (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). A growth mindset recognizes that people are not limited in what they can accomplish. In fact, Dweck says, “I’m not saying we have unlimited capabilities. I’m saying we have no idea” (Raz, 2016). I started thinking about how I may have limited myself by saying something like, “Well, I’m just not artistic enough.” After learning about growth mindset and beginning to internalize it, I even decided to take a watercolor class because I wasn’t afraid of failing anymore!

“THE POWER OF YET”

Dweck begins her original TED Talk (2014) by referencing what she refers to as “the power of yet.” She describes a school in which students who weren’t ready to pass a course were given a grade of “not yet” instead of a failing grade. She realized that this “not yet” terminology encapsulates the growth mindset. Instead of focusing on an immediate passing or failing grade, the students would re-engage with the material until they had mastered it (Dweck, 2014).

I showed Dweck’s TED Talk (2014) to my students. We discussed the power of “not yet,” first as relating to their own children, and then as relating to themselves. I encouraged them to use “not yet” as self-talk when they were facing problems that were difficult. Simultaneously, I also found myself talking about their “failures” differently. When a student would bring me a test with a 142 score (with a passing score being 145), I would tell him, “This is good—it tells us where you are. You’re not there yet, but if you keep working like you have been, you’re well on your way.”

INCREASED MOTIVATION

Because one of the key features of adult learners is the need for internal motivation, helping students understand and apply growth mindset to their thought process aids in motivation. Teaching students about brain development makes them more likely to take on challenges and learn from errors (Yeager et al., 2016). I started helping my students to really use the feedback given on the GED® testing forms. I did this not to say, “This is what you don’t know,” but rather to say, “This is an area in which you can improve your score.”

We started hearing our students encourage each other using growth mindset viewpoint. One would be discouraged with a perceived lack of improvement in an area, and another would say, “You’ve got this, man! Let me help you understand it better.” One of our GED® graduates, who had struggled for more than a year to finish his testing, would come in to our classroom and write encouraging notes on the board in the front of the class.

We also saw students apply these principles to themselves. One of our students, who had experienced traumatic brain injury (TBI), started out in classes not able to remember material from one day to the next. He

didn't think he could be successful, and before I learned about growth mindset, I wasn't so sure myself. But as I learned about growth mindset, and as we started helping him recognize the improvement he was making and the work he was putting into learning, he gradually started being able to remember information from one day to the next. Then he could remember concepts from a month earlier. When he was down to his last test, math, he spent hours each day working on math: in class, on his own, with a tutor, or on the computer program. He told me, "Michelle, I can feel my brain working again, and I don't want it to stop." He even began dreaming about math! When he was ultimately successful in obtaining his GED® credential, he broke down in tears. He told us that continuing to study gave him the confidence he needed to learn new things. He is now living in the community and is a valued employee at a job baking pies in a local restaurant, despite having been told he would need to apply for disability after the TBI. He credits his brain recovery to his GED® study.

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Whether we are discussing adult education students in a community or a corrections setting, or the lifelong learners we should all be as teachers, there doesn't seem to be anything more important than having a growth mindset. In an adult education setting, that starts with us, the adult educators. If we do not have a growth mindset regarding our students and ourselves, we cannot inspire it in them. I now try to show the TED talk to my students several times a year, and when I look at below-passing scores with them, I always say, "You're not there yet, but you will get there!" ☞

Michelle Candy has taught high school English in Hawaii, high school and college English learners in China, Hong Kong, and Oregon, and incarcerated adult students in North Dakota. She has been teaching for the North Dakota Department of Corrections since 2015. She holds a BA in English literature from the University of Northern Colorado and an MA in TESOL from Azusa Pacific University.

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EDUCATORS BEHIND BARS

Robert Fewins

Clark County School District

ABSTRACT

In this article, school counselor Robert Fewins shares some insights from his years of experience working in correctional education. In his own words, he shares ideas of what inmate students are like, as well as some of the nuances and challenges in instructing them. He discusses ideas of how to have the greatest impact on incarcerated students. As a final thought, he expresses a proven counseling philosophy that works in the prison setting.

It was a very surreal experience when I found myself walking onto the prison yard of a men's maximum security prison for my very first time. I was starting a new career as a high school counselor assigned to the education department of an ominous, overwhelming, secure fortress. I have been in many correctional facilities since then, and they all have their particular flavor of security. They all have some form of heavy sliding doors, electronic locks controlled from a remote location, metal detectors, and occasional pat downs. Regulations about my lunch change depending on place and time—these days, I must pack my lunches in see-through plastic bags and containers that can be searched at a glance. Every facility has dress codes and rules that have to be strictly adhered to. Every person that works in the facility goes through yearly training and they are constantly reminded of the dangers of being compromised by inmates. Trainers circulate countless stories of people with good intentions who were compromised by the very people they had come to help. As with so many other situations, the follies of a few dictate the rules and regulations that affect the many. There are two things that are definitely sure: Prison Education is no joking matter, and the education staff at a prison is far safer than the staff at any other educational facility.

Since that first year, I have been in and worked at several different prison facilities. I have worked with men, women, and youth at various levels of incarceration from maximum to minimum and at jails or holding facilities. I have much to tell you about my experiences, but there are some specific goals I have in writing this article, so I will limit what I share in order to focus on those goals. There are three things I want to accomplish: First, I want to give you my take on who the inmate students are that attend classes in prison facilities. Then, I want to give teachers/instructors some ideas as to how to have the greatest impact on these students. Finally, I want to briefly share my favorite counseling strategy.

Who are the inmates who become the students in a prison education department? Let's start with John I. Student. What is he like? It needs to be said that an inmate's reasons for dropping out of school are not much different than any high school dropout that we meet on the street. Most guys think school is too boring. They want life to be a little more challenging. Let's say they lost their care for school and other things hold greater importance. Some of them are looking for fun. They would rather party and enjoy life than sit in a boring classroom and learn about humdrum school subjects. Drugs or addictions are a big distraction for quite a

few. For several, there is a desire to have better things like nicer clothes, a car to drive, or video game players and electronic equipment. The point here is that they have a screaming need to get a job and have money to spend. Some job seekers need money because of their family situations. Mom and dad need help to make a living. They need to be among the breadwinners of the family. These are a few of the reasons male prisoners are left to complete their education while in prison.

What about Jane S. Inmate? Who is she in the education department? Now, please don't get me wrong when I say this but, a lot of the women had some male in their lifetime make a promise to them that they will be taken care of. For most, it's the boyfriend who gets her pregnant and assures her that he will provide everything she will ever need. Maybe she agrees because she has a deeper desire to be a mom and a housewife. She doesn't share the goal of struggling to make a career. There are quite a few women who face cultural values that say the woman doesn't need an education and should stay at home to be the caregiver. Several will explain that they stayed home while their single mother worked to put bread on the table. They raised their siblings.

For John and Jane both, there is a shared aspect of dropping out of school that often goes unacknowledged. For most, their parents lacked parenting skills. Family drama, divorce, or arguments drove them out of the house and school. They just wanted to get away from it all. They share one other thing: Prison students face an element of confusion that normal dropouts do not. A majority of them struggle with social, anxiety, or mood disorders. Most of them faced special school placements or expulsions for behavior issues. Many of them will tell you that they lived among various relatives, were raised by a friend's parents, couch-surfed, or were homeless and unsettled. A huge majority experienced youth correctional facilities. Somewhere in their misfit or socially disorganized lifestyle, they picked up an element of "criminal intent". Without boundaries for several years of their existence, they accepted standards that violate socially acceptable norms.

What does who they are have to do with me as an instructor in the classroom? To reach and teach John and Jane, an instructor has to become a creative curriculum master, an advisor, and a social director. Because they have never completed high school, these students have never experienced educational success. In their eyes, all they have been is a failure when it comes to learning. Because of this, teachers need to design their curriculum with success-building experiences. Let's call it developing rigor. Creating simple quizzes or daily knowledge checks helps students make daily progress and gives them a sense of being successful. This provides the motivation to face the rigor of a demanding classroom schedule. The nice thing about most prisons is that in order to provide classroom time for more inmates, the daily schedule has to be broken up so several groups can participate. This requires some creative scheduling. Most prison schedules allow for about three hours of classroom time for any particular group of students. Scheduling has to take into consideration count times when the inmates have to be locked up and counted. These occur around every 4 hours. During these 'break times' is when the teachers take a lunch or perform classroom prep. As a counselor, I have known students who were unable to concentrate for even 3 hours. They get overwhelmed with the taxing demands on their thinking processes.

Since so many of the students lack soft skills like note-taking or study habits, teachers need to instruct students to develop these abilities. All classroom work, as a standard, is independent study so the students are competing with themselves, not other students. Other ingrained struggles to overcome are mental barriers and defense mechanisms. Students will often cop out with "I can't do it," "I won't do it," or "this is who I am so you just have to deal with it." Several will go into the "you can't tell me what to do" mode. Their attitude and thinking toward academic work needs to be challenged. To overcome this, the teaching staff needs to develop strict classroom rules that provide behavior guidelines. Sometimes it takes being creative with the curriculum

and offering certain students special nuances in their academic plan. Some teachers create fast track, extra credit, or monthly reading specials to motivate students. Another important tool is to provide educational breaks from the curriculum. It's important to take time out for activities such as Freedom Friday or Discussion Day. Taking some of the core curriculum and developing games or activities breaks up the week. Students will even study to be competitive in such events. Group activities and projects make learning a lot more fun!

I said I wanted to briefly share my favorite counseling strategy. One thing you never want to do is have an inmate tell you all about their life of crimes and misdemeanors. The most important thing is not to dig up the past and rehash mistakes or analyze where “things went wrong.” Such discussions are not productive and often lead to the inmate believing that they now have an advocate on their side. The best counseling philosophy that I have found effective is William Glasser’s concept of Reality Therapy. The whole idea is to challenge a person to think about what they would do to eradicate a problem. Get them to start talking about what they would say or how they would go about solving an issue. Who would they talk to? What would they say? How would they compromise if a solution wasn’t available? By having them develop a plan or set some goals, you help them learn to solve problems on their own. The point is to have them face reality!

Well, I hope there is something in what I have said that will help someone in their quest to aid incarcerated individuals to find success in correctional education facilities. It has been proven that education is a major key to reducing recidivism. There are several challenges to overcome, but even the smallest success is a very rewarding experience. ☹

Robert Fewins is a counselor with the Adult Education Department of the Clark County School District. Education is the last of several careers he has taken on. He has a background in the construction, entertainment, and convention services industries. He is “Papa” to 12 wonderful grandchildren.

A RIGHT TO LEARN: EARNING A DEGREE WITH A CRIMINAL CONVICTION

Anna Giannicchi

College & Community Fellowship

ABSTRACT

This paper strives to offer an honest reflection of an academic advisor who has worked in and out of correctional facilities to make higher education accessible to all people. Additionally, barriers experienced by many students who have been impacted by the justice system are discussed. This paper reflects on how community colleges play a significant role in a justice-involved student's success and how interdisciplinary support systems are a necessity to ensure student success. The author emphasizes the importance of specific programs dedicated to working with students who have had been incarcerated, as these programs use a nuanced and multi-dimensional approach to advocate for them.

My role as an academic counselor was never clearer to me than when I advocated for students who had been impacted by the criminal justice system. Most of my formative years in advising were spent in school myself, allowing me to develop an empathy for the students I was working with that strengthened our alliance. I, too, understood the tight pinch of disappointment when a class closed before I had finished outlining my academic plan. I felt the cold and heavy hesitation of signing away years of my life to pay off student loans. I knew what it meant to have a professor who did not believe in my success.

If my goals were ever deterred by barriers disguised as rejection letters, slow-acting payment plans, or the apathetic bureaucracy of overwhelmed staff, I fought twice as hard for my students to be sure they did not encounter the same obstacles. Academic barriers were simply people I needed to introduce myself to. One particularly telling experience was in working with a student who had seemingly suddenly withdrawn from her classes with no warning. Halfway through the semester, she was arrested and subsequently incarcerated, and could not drop her classes. She owed her college money and her transcript was littered with failed courses. The student was understandably distraught, certain that disclosing her criminal justice involvement would do her more harm than good. Together, we wrote an academic appeal that offered a compelling narrative of her life while not revealing more than absolutely necessary. She pulled together documentation to explain her absence from school while I visited the departments that reviewed her application, confirming for us both that her appeal was being seriously reviewed.

One particular department was outright dismissive and demanded that I—the presumed student—email a generic address and wait up to two weeks for a response. Clarifying that I was, in fact, the *advisor* of the student changed the demeanor of the office entirely. No longer was I a student on academic probation, attempting to climb over institutional and stigmatic barriers that the college had placed before me. I was a figure of authority and I was not to be deterred. Staff members whisked me into tiny offices, affirmed the arbitrariness of what made an appeal successful, and conceded that processing my student's would be lengthy and unwieldy. Her file was marked with a special note that I was personally handling her case, and she was

accepted back into the college in the following semester.

Had I been in my former student's situation, I would have felt the formidable red tape swaddling the appeals process and I may have given up altogether. Very few students have support systems that are willing to advocate for them so persistently, especially when they have been so staunchly stigmatized by the criminal justice system. This student is continuing her education at a senior college, but it is worth noting that many of my students find success in circumventing more traditional higher education barriers by attending community college. Besides the obvious lower costs, smaller class size, and geographic convenience, community colleges provide an ease of accessibility that is rivaled by few and admired by many. As community institutions, they respond to the needs of the community in which they were established. As my student and I learned, senior colleges that have a particular focus or orientation need not specifically address the needs of the students they serve; they do not have to, as they already have a draw that makes them a desirable institution. Community colleges are quiet allies for our students due to both their presence in the neighborhood and their grasp on who they are serving. A student at a community college may not need to formally disclose that they are someone who has been impacted by the justice system. Community colleges structure their programs to benefit a student all the same (Mina, Fulmer, & Smith, 2010).

As a person who works most often alongside the City University of New York (CUNY), I and my organization, College & Community Fellowship (CCF), have formed strong partnerships with community colleges across New York City. Their implicit and explicit support of our clientele plays an active and passionate role in where our students enroll. CUNY's community colleges all offer "Single Stop" services, where a student can receive confidential, free services that include legal counseling, assistance in enrolling in healthcare and food stamps programs, and emergency funding. This is a service not found at CUNY's eleven senior colleges save for one—John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a senior college that often caters to students who are living with many life stressors. John Jay College is also the only senior college currently participating in the City University's CUNY Justice Academy program. Six of the seven CUNY community colleges offer the chance to participate in the CUNY Justice Academy, wherein a student who is in school for their Associate's degree will be guaranteed admission to obtain their Baccalaureate degree. The students can do so without paying for any fees that would normally come with transitioning to a senior college. Additionally, because the CUNY Justice Academy is a community in itself, the students can come into the senior college with an already-formed support system. Dual-degree programs like these save our students from the fear of needing to disclose their justice involvement in new personal statements or to unfamiliar admissions counselors. Moreover, it allows for a student to be motivated about continuing their education even after they've received their Associate's degree.

Our students are fortunate to receive clearly expressed support from a number of outstanding community college departments. CCF's longtime ally Hostos Community College runs a program called "Students Overcoming All Obstacles," which offers career counseling, academic advisement, and professional development workshops. The goal of programs like these is to fill some of the gaps in our students' knowledge in areas such as computer literacy, how to apply for internships in a digital age, and how to send professional correspondence. Not only does CCF encourage students to join programs like this one, but should one of the staff members at the community college meet a student that they believe is a good match for our program, they will put our organization in contact with them. What makes reentry-centered programs like these so successful for our students is their partnership with a college's academic advisement center. Early in my career, I served both a reentry organization as well as John Jay College's Academic Advisement Center. This provided some overlap and the students who first saw me as their reentry counselor were relieved to see that they could also utilize me as their academic advisor. These students trusted my referrals because they were certain I

had their best interests at heart, and they could ask questions that they may never have voiced to another staff member at the school who was not familiar with their history. Community college staff members who readily call themselves allies of students with criminal justice involvement can help students feel comfortable in disclosing some of the barriers they may not talk about otherwise. This honesty leads to greater understanding of the advisors looking to help the students, which in turn brings about better overall student success.

In these examples, we see how a community college can provide a comfortable setting for a student who is just returning to school, or for a student who is new to higher education altogether. For students on the inside, community colleges offer a chance to become acquainted with learning at a collegiate level. For example, students at Brookwood Secure Center—a New York state correctional facility for juveniles who were convicted of certain violent felonies in adult criminal court—collaborate with teachers and students from the neighboring community college. Their partnership with Columbia-Greene Community College gives students the opportunity to receive their Associate’s degree from a SUNY school—a plus for any student looking to continue their education at a public New York college, as the transition from one City or State University school to another is not unusual. Students can network with professors that they may work with again once they come home and enroll in school, and they have the chance to hear what going to college is like firsthand from students who are in school. Having an already established community college presence makes the prospect of college seem all the more realistic to students. This is a luxury that few have access to; as a former tutor on Rikers, I answered many questions about what it was like to attend college. For many of my students, I was one of the few people they knew who spoke about college as a viable option.

Herein lies the importance of organizations such as College & Community Fellowship. A fundamental pillar of helping to promote success in others—as outlined in therapeutic interventions including harm reduction and motivational interviewing—is to meet people where they are (Harkey, Sortedahl, Crook, & Sminkey, 2017). CCF’s visits to Taconic and Bedford Hills Correctional Facilities are paramount because they give a physical and mental impression of meeting the potential student where they are: currently incarcerated and curious about college. It is a way to solidify the understanding that higher education is a path not usually celebrated in correctional facilities and that there are people who will be waiting for them on the outside. This promise is solidified even more deeply when members of higher education institutions join our visits to correctional facilities, as they can say with certainty that the students can look for them once they enroll. In the same way that a community college may ease the transition from secondary education to higher education, CCF and programs like ours allay the stress students may feel about enrolling in college all on their own. Since our founding, less than 6% of our participants have been re-incarcerated or re-arrested, and we have supported hundreds of students in earning degrees that range from Associate to Juris Doctorate. We offer a support system that cannot be matched—one that brings a host of like-minded students pursuing their dreams, financial alleviations, opportunities for professional development, and a score of people willing to go to bat for them. We bring a wealth of knowledge in how to circumvent the barriers that seem so impossible to overcome. Above all, we offer dedication to the mission that education is a right that should be accessible to all.

When I meet a new client who is hoping to enroll in college, I often draw them a map in the shape of a mountain. “You are here,” I say, making a small circle at the beginning of the mountain. I draw steps in the form of collecting transcripts, of writing personal statements, applying for financial aid. I line the paper with contact numbers, next steps, and upcoming appointments. My clients leave with shiny folders decorated with our blue and white logo, clutching their futures tightly in their hands. “You are here, and I am here with you.” ☞

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WHY AREN'T WE SPENDING MORE ON PRISONER EDUCATION?

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Education reduces crime, plain and simple.

The RAND Corporation underscored the positive impact of education in its 2013 review of the research reports on correctional education over the last couple of decades (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013). Bottom line from their reports: providing education programs for incarcerated men and women significantly reduces future crime all by itself, separate from any other treatment they receive.

Combined with other effective programs, such as drug rehabilitation and mental health counseling, education can help to reduce crime and recidivism even more effectively.

RAND also demonstrated clearly that an education program pays for itself several times over. Every dollar invested in correctional education creates a return of five dollars in the reduction of future criminal justice costs.

So why are we not spending more criminal justice dollars on education? We literally spend billions on the most expensive—and least effective—option: locking folks behind bars in record numbers.

Let's take a brief look at the large numbers of people incarcerated in the U.S. and the cost in dollars the American taxpayer must bear. Here are some facts from research and data collected by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education:

- Approximately 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the U.S., more than in any other developed nation by number and percentage of population;
- Educational attainment levels among prisoners are far below the national average;
- A lack of education is a major predictor of future crime;
- Over two-thirds of those incarcerated are African American and Latino, predominantly men;
- 95 percent of prisoners will eventually be released from prison, with 600,000 released each year;
- The annual budget for federal, state and local correctional agencies totals \$80 billion.

Most criminologists understand the effectiveness of education and other programs but, because of the American "tough on crime" campaign going all the way back to the late 1980s, less money is spent on rehabilitation than incarceration.

If we know this is counter-productive, why do our federal leaders, as well as many state leaders, continue to spend little for correctional education programs? Why aren't they re-directing funding from prison beds to schools and classrooms instead of building more cells?

Research tells us that 95 percent of those incarcerated today will be released within five years. Within three years the majority of those currently behind bars will be returning to society. We are not likely to reduce sentence lengths or parole for most of these people, so why don't we take this opportunity to educate them while behind bars?

There are signs this may be finally be changing.

The current White House has shown real interest in prison reform and investment in programs to reduce recidivism. In May 2018, a report entitled "Returns on Investments in Recidivism-Reducing Programs" by the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) reviewed and reported on research on mental health, substance abuse and education programs that are cost-effective.

Oddly, the study focused mostly on mental health and substance abuse and did not cite the extensive research report conducted by the RAND Corporation in recent years. The CEA report, however, did say, "We calculate that educational programming needs only a modest impact on recidivism rates of around 2 percent in order to be cost effective" (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018, executive summary).

The RAND study on correctional education, however, estimated the real impact to be 13 percent, much higher than the two percent needed to be cost effective.

Research also shows more appalling statistics about the education deficits of the prison population. Most incarcerated people are dropouts, with more than half of them lacking a high school education. The lack of education does not in itself cause crime but it is highly correlated with other social problems such as criminal behavior, drug addiction, homelessness and poverty. Because under-educated people do not qualify for jobs with a living wage, many resort to illegal ways to support themselves.

So why not redirect more of the correctional budget currently spent on cells to fund more education programs?

It makes simple economic sense if education reduces future criminal behavior. Some advocacy groups are getting the message. For example, the conservative Koch brothers are launching Safe Streets and Second Chances, pilot programs in four states to provide career education, substance-abuse programming and counseling to 1,000 prisoners who will then be released.

This project exemplifies the bipartisan nature of the current movement for the expansion of programs to reduce recidivism and return prisoners to society as productive workers.

If programs for inmates, who lack basic academic and vocational skills, were increased and more people left prison with diplomas and career certifications, researchers could confidently predict a significant drop in future crime. Why can't we begin remodeling our jails and prisons into educational institutions by repurposing space with high school completion and job skills programs? If there is no appropriate space, why not move some portable classrooms behind the fence or into the yard?

Research also seems to indicate that higher levels of achievement result in even less crime. There is data indicating that inmates who participate in college commit future crime at even lower levels. Shouldn't we support college level courses as well? For years the public has generally supported high school education for the incarcerated but not college.

Times have changed and we know that a high school education is no longer sufficient to obtain decent employment. The new standard is at least a two-year degree or a career technical certificate.

Some people believe it is too late to turn adult criminals around to lead a positive life. In fact, inmates do participate and achieve in school behind bars even if they are simply required to attend.

Testimony from former inmates clearly demonstrates how academic success changed their perception of themselves along with their own personal goals. College teachers who work in both the free community and in prisons will tell you that incarcerated students generally do much better than those in the community.

As we know in the free world it is never too late to complete school and to graduate. Lifelong learning really works for most everyone.

Maybe a little history will help explain why we are spending so little on education and more on incarceration. In 1994, with violent crime and drug abuse growing fast, federal and state governments got much tougher on crime, passing laws instituting numerous and more strict sanctions against offenders of all kinds.

Before then, inmates were eligible for Pell grants. Most states had robust college programs for inmates. In a swirl of frenzy and false accusations of fraud about fly-by-night colleges stealing federal money, Congress ended inmate eligibility for Pell grants and severely limited the federal funding levels for high school, vocational, and adult education programs as well.

When many of us were seeking support in our struggle against these foolish cuts, I hoped to affect the negative attitudes in the press and contacted columnist George F. Will who agreed to visit a college classroom of Maryland prison inmates using Pell grants. In a Jan 30, 1994 article published in the Detroit Free Press and the Washington Post, entitled "Do Pell grants for prisoners work?," Will posited that Baltimore's streets "...may be safer than they would be if he [an inmate nicknamed "Peanut"] had not acquired some social skills with the help of his Pell grant."

In a discussion the day before releasing the article, Will told me that he would be happy to consider revisiting the issue of correctional education when better research studies documenting the effectiveness of correctional education were available.

In the next several years better research became available, and thanks to the studies noted above that were conducted by Dr. Lois Davis and her research team at the RAND Corporation, many research studies were rigorously reviewed (Davis, Bozick, et al., 2013). The RAND publication noted above concluded that for every dollar spent on correctional education, five dollars are saved on three-year re-incarceration costs (Davis, Steele, et al., 2014).

The research had meticulously reviewed every quality research study completed over the last two decades. RAND researchers wrote that the estimate of reduction was conservative and they had not been able to measure other positive results, such as job acquisition, improved family and community conditions and conditions of confinement.

What has been the impact of this study? Has the study resulted in the growth of educational budgets for the incarcerated? Have state and federal correctional education budgets begun to grow as legislators take into account the effectiveness of correctional education? Hardly!

The RAND study had actually pointed out opposite trends in funding. Federal and state budgets for correctional education have been significantly reduced since the 2008 recession, in some states by as much as 20 percent, even while prison populations continued to grow. In an age of soul searching about how to spend tax dollars wisely on cost-effective social programs with high impact, one would hope political leaders would do some serious thinking and take heed of cost-effective research by non-partisan corporations like RAND.

The Obama administration had disseminated and publicized the conclusions of the RAND study and encouraged the adoption of its recommendations. But as it has with so many other important issues, Congress

has failed to act on research it originally funded.

With the notable exceptions of Georgia and California and a few other states, there have been few or no changes in state funding in recent years for the education of the incarcerated. Ever since the mid-1990s, most states have continued to trim education programs in prisons.

One example is California. After he was elected in 2003, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's administration decided to cut correctional education programs drastically. Ironically, in the last few years, partly as a result of the RAND research, California has dramatically expanded academic and career technology as well as post-secondary programs. For example, inmates also now qualify for free community college tuition while incarcerated.

Another exception is the normally conservative state of Georgia. It has also taken to heart the RAND research and re-designed its entire correctional education system and also increased state funding dramatically. A post for a statewide superintendent of prison schools was created. Many more teachers were hired and programs implemented. And an investment was made in educational technology to modernize instruction and teach computer skills necessary for today's job market ("Georgia expands," 2015).

While now admitting the RAND research is solid, most politicians continue to say no to additional funds because there are more pressing needs. Never mind that we were simply asking for redirection of current budgets, not additional outlays of public funds.

Fortunately for the U.S., some leaders have begun to rethink the costly and mostly ineffective "Get Tough on Crime" movement of the last 30 years. That terribly misguided effort to stem the rise of murder, violence and the drug epidemic resulted in the so-called "Three Strikes and You are Out" legislation signed by President Bill Clinton and then copied into state law by many governors and state legislators.

Millions of people have been incarcerated for longer periods of time at the cost of billions of dollars with additional and terribly negative impacts on our communities and families. Only when it had become apparent that the U.S. could no longer pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the criminal justice system have political leaders started taking a serious look at the negative results of the draconian and unjust crime reduction laws.

President George W. Bush and other political leaders had begun to realize the folly of the "Three Strikes and You Are Out" laws of the 1990s. Bush recommended the passage of the Second Chance Act of 2002 in one of his early State of the Union addresses. The momentum has slowly grown since and reformation has become a bipartisan issue. Instead of spending billions on incarceration, some are beginning to look at less costly rehabilitation programs and reentry as a way to reduce future crime.

There are now strong efforts at the federal level to rethink how we are doing correctional business. Those of us in the education, drug rehabilitation, and mental health areas are working to persuade political leaders to bring about change in the laws and priorities in budgets.

One of the most recent examples at the federal level is the fight within the White House between Attorney General Sessions and Jared Kushner over the basic philosophy of corrections and the role of prisons to build programs that reduce recidivism. An article in the *New York Times* illustrates the strong feelings among political leaders, particularly in the Senate, about the direction of prison reform: Kushner, partly as a result of his own father's incarceration in the federal Bureau of Prisons, believes in the need for more rehabilitation and reentry programs. Sessions, unfortunately, remains one of the most steadfast believers in longer sentences and tough drug laws (Apuzzo, 2018).

Positive change can be painfully slow. However, when the U.S. does become interested in a particular issue,

it is amazing how quickly it can retool and redirect its resources. For those of us old enough to remember, we did it by putting a man on the moon when the Russians threatened U.S. leadership in the space race.

Hopefully, we can redirect ourselves again to help change the direction of the lives of so many people returning to society after years of incarceration.

Education is not rocket science.

We already know how to teach people to read, write, do math and train for jobs. For the sake of the incarcerated and, literally, for our own health and safety, let's build and open more school programs in our prisons and jails. Education does reduce recidivism!

Chief Justice Warren Burger said it best, in a 1987 speech to the American Bar Association:

We must accept the reality that to confine offenders behind walls without trying to change them is an expensive folly with short term benefits—winning battles while losing the war. It is wrong, it is expensive, it is stupid.

Finally, I hope that since we now have the solid research George Will asked for, he might consider looking at correctional education programs again, take to heart the RAND conclusions, and write a follow-up to article about "Peanut".

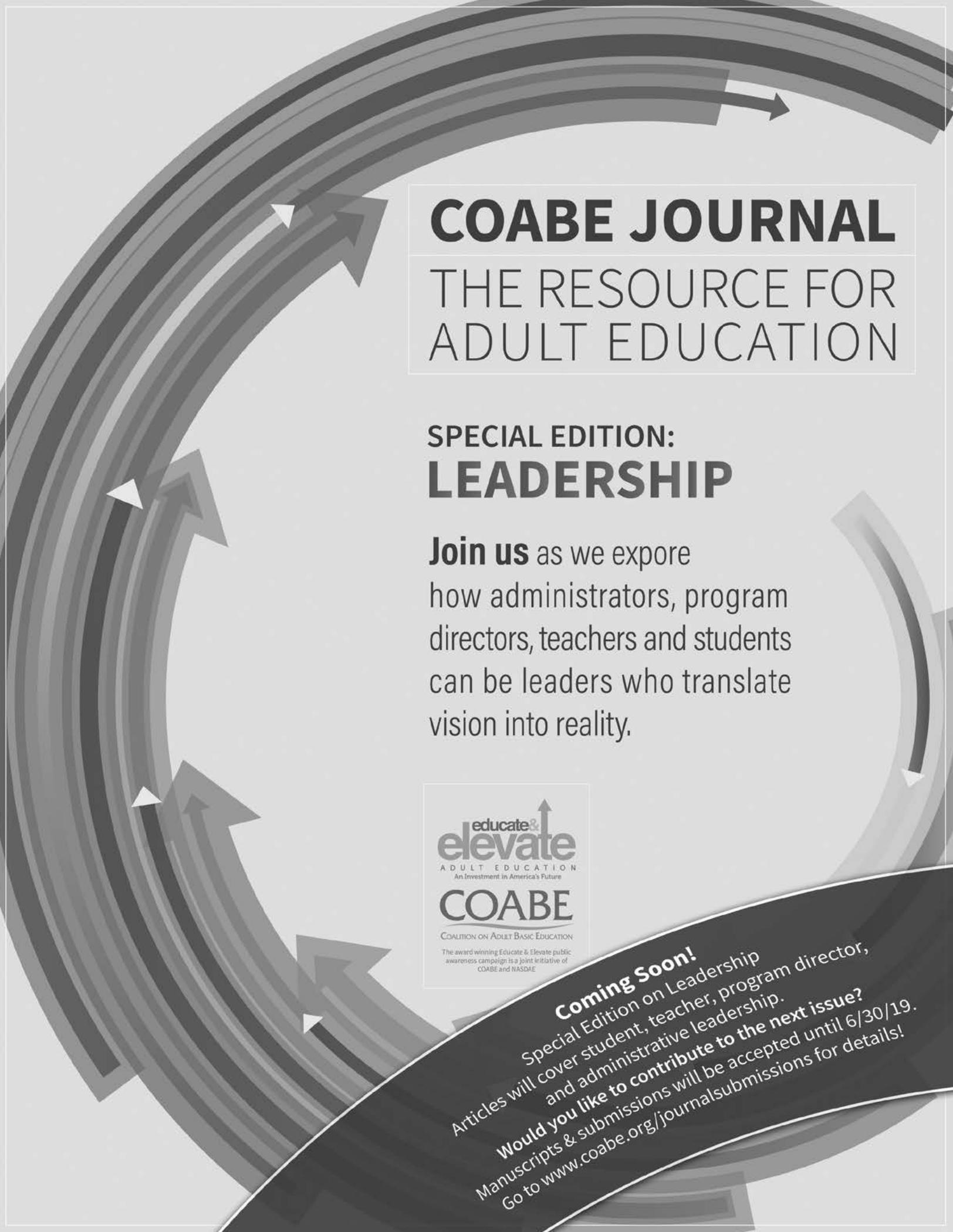
We continue to need serious political writers, both liberals and conservatives, to urge government and courts to get really "tough on crime" and sentence criminals to do their time in school to straighten out their lives.

We need to literally "throw the book at them." ☞

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