WE NO LONGER NEED TO DEBATE CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Correctional Education Association - Wisconsin

“We No Longer Need to Debate Whether Correctional Education Works”

Prison inmates who receive general education and vocational training are significantly less likely to return to prison after release and are more likely to find employment than peers who do not receive such opportunities, according to a new RAND Corporation research report funded by the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Assistance which was released on August 22, 2013.

The findings, from the largest-ever meta-analysis of correctional educational studies, suggest that prison education programs are cost effective, with a $1 investment in prison education reducing incarceration costs by $4 to $5 during the first three years post-release.

“We found strong evidence that correctional education plays a role in reducing recidivism,” said Lois Davis, the project’s lead researcher and a senior policy researcher at RAND, a nonprofit research organization. “Our findings are clear that providing inmates education programs and vocational training helps keep them from returning to prison and improves their future job prospects.”

Researchers found that inmates who participate in correctional education programs have 43% lower odds of returning to prison than those who do not. The estimate is based on studies that carefully account for motivation and other differences between correctional education recipients and non-recipients.

Employment after release was 13% higher among prisoners who participated in either academic or vocational education programs than those who did not. Those who participated in vocational training were 28% more likely to be employed after release from prison than who did not receive such training.

The findings also suggest that prison education programs are cost effective. The direct costs of providing education are estimated to be from $1,400 to $1,744 per inmate, with re-incarceration costs being $8,700 to $9,700 less for each inmate who received correctional education as compared to those who did not.  

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“Our findings suggest that we no longer need to debate whether correctional education works,” Davis said. “But we do need more research to tease out which parts of these programs work best.”

The study, which was supported by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, should be of interest to corrections officials and state lawmakers as they cope with operating prisons during difficult budget times.

In a separate press release from the Justice and Education Departments Attorney General Eric Holder concluded, “These findings reinforce the need to become smarter on crime by expanding proven strategies for keeping our communities safe, and ensuring that those who have paid their debts to society have the chance to become productive citizens. We have an opportunity and an obligation to use smart methods — and advance innovative new programs — that can improve public safety while reducing costs. As it stands, too many individuals and communities are harmed, rather than helped, by a criminal justice system that does not serve the American people as well as it should. This important research is part of our broader effort to change that.”

“Correctional education programs provide incarcerated individuals with the skills and knowledge essential to their futures,” said Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “Investing in these education programs helps released prisoners get back on their feet — and stay on their feet — when they return to communities across the country.”

There long has been debate about the role prison-based education programs can play in preparing inmates to return to society and keeping them from returning to prison. Recidivism remains high nationally, with four in 10 inmates returning to prison within three years of release. While most states offer some type of correctional education, surveys find no more than half of inmates receive any instruction.

In general, people in U.S. prisons have less education than the general population. In 2004, 36 percent of individuals in state prisons had less than a high school diploma, compared to 19 percent of the general U.S. population older than 16. In addition, ex-offenders frequently lack vocational skills and a steady history of employment. Researchers say the dynamics of prison entry and re-entry to society make it hard for ex-offenders to find work and build an employment history.
RAND researchers conducted a comprehensive review of the scientific literature of research on correctional education and performed a meta-analysis to synthesize the findings from multiple studies about the effectiveness of correctional education programs. A meta-analysis is a comprehensive way of synthesizing findings from multiple studies to develop scientific consensus about the efficacy of a program or an intervention.

The analysis was limited to studies published about education programs in the United States that included an academic or vocational curriculum with a structured instructional component. The analysis focused on recidivism, but also examined whether education improved labor force participation and gains in academic achievement test scores. The study did not assess life skills programs.

Programs that offered instruction toward a high school diploma or general education development (GED) certificate were the most common approach. Studies that included adult basic education, high school diploma/GED, postsecondary education and vocational training all showed reductions in recidivism. Because of overlaps in curriculum and a lack of detail about the duration of instruction, researchers could not determine what types of programs worked best.

Researchers also examined the relationship between computer-assisted instruction and academic performance, which is important in prisons because the technology allows self-paced learning that can be delivered at a lower cost than traditional instruction. The study found some evidence that computer-assisted instruction further improved math and reading achievement among inmates, but the findings were not strong enough to reach a final conclusion.

CEA Executive Director Steve Steurer led a team of CEA members who contributed to the research. He commented, “We are so proud to have been associated as partners with the RAND study. A number of CEA folks worked as advisors to the RAND team and are acknowledged in the beginning of the publication. The best thing about the study is the positive findings about recidivism reduction and improved employment outcomes for offenders who participated in correctional education programs while incarcerated. Please take time to download and read the study. It is something we will certainly be using to make our case to the media, public and political leaders.”

The RAND report may be found at http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html#abstract.

**Quick Facts**

Data on incarceration rates from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, reveal:

- In 2009, there were 23,364 individuals in prison in Wisconsin about 12% more than a decade before
- Wisconsin’s prison incarceration rate in 2009 was 413 individuals in prison per 100,000 of the state’s population, 22% below the U.S. average (526) but about 9% above the Midwestern average (374)
- Prison incarceration rates vary considerably among Midwestern state. For example, Michigan’s rate was almost 2.5 times that of Minnesota
- Total spending on corrections in Wisconsin totaled $1.4 billion in 2008, including $976 million at the state level and $470 million at the local level
- Per-capita spending on state corrections is the second highest in the Midwest and, when local spending is added in, it is the highest in the Midwest
- Wisconsin state spending (not including the local level) was $976 million on corrections in 2008 out of total state expenditures of 32.6 billion, equaling 3% of the state budget
- Spending on state corrections equaled $173 per Wisconsin resident in 2008, the second highest among Midwestern states
- Although Ohio and Indiana have higher incarceration rate than Wisconsin, their per-capita spending is lower
CEA-Wisconsin Honors Two of Its Friends

For the 25th consecutive year, the Wisconsin Chapter of the Correctional Education Association is showing its appreciation to individuals and organizations who have helped to improve educational opportunities for offenders in Wisconsin correctional facilities. Since the Friends of Correctional Education Award was founded, the contributions of 89 individuals and organizations have been honored by the CEA-Wisconsin Board.

This year, CEA-Wisconsin is again recognizing some of these volunteers with the Friends of Correctional Education Award. Those receiving this award may be volunteers who have contributed time and effort to an education program, community agency employees who have presented special workshops, business people who have donated funds or materials to make programs more effective, or advocates of correctional education. Certificates for these Friends of Correctional Education Award winners will be presented at special ceremonies held at the facilities involved. The 2013 winners are:

James Batasky – Volunteer

For the past five years, Jim Batasky (a.k.a. Jim the volunteer) has volunteered his time and skills at the LaCrosse County Jail by teaching Employment Skills one afternoon each week. Jim enjoys the interaction with students. He works hard to help students address the problems that they face when trying to get back to work in the LaCrosse community.

“No two groups are ever the same,” stated Jim recently. He focuses on staying on point when addressing the many job hunting dilemmas that students bring up for discussion during class. The key components that Jim covers during the sessions include: job interview techniques, networking, how to prepare for and conduct oneself during an interview, and how to become a successful worker after obtaining the job.

Students and staff truly value the effort and time that Jim puts into making these classes so interesting and successful. “He makes you think about what you have to do in order to get the job and keep it,” said a student who recently graduated from the class. Through his dedication to volunteering, Jim Batasky is making a big difference in the lives of students at the La Crosse County Jail.

James Batasky was nominated by La Crosse County Jail teacher and CEA-Wisconsin Board member Willa MacKenzie.

Rita Muwonge – UW-Milwaukee Educational Opportunity Center

Rita is the Director of the UW-Milwaukee (UWM) Educational Opportunity Center which offers federal grant monies to incarcerated Milwaukee County males returning to school.

Rita was raised in Africa and came to the United States as a youngsters where she became familiar with racial difficulties and cultural differences. Her ability to discuss diversity and the importance of education with the DOC students at the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF) has been inspirational and rewarding to each of the students she meets. Her experience of overcoming poverty and lack of education has brought new hope to the students she meets both in the classroom at MSDF and in her office at UWM.

The Educational Opportunities Center program targets first generation college students and from low-income families who are interested in pursuing and completing postsecondary education or are seeking to complete their secondary credential. Rita provides assistance with the college admissions and financial aid application processes. The extra opportunity that these services afford MSDF students has been greatly appreciated by both the student and the teacher, Cheri Wontor.

Rita Muwonge was nominated by Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility teacher Cheri Wontor.
Oakhill Correctional Institution Fundraiser Nets $4,000 for Local Charities

Oakhill Correctional Institution’s (OCI) annual holiday wreath sale raised over $4,000 which was donated to three Dane County service agencies at a July 12th ceremony.

For each of the past nine years, the Oakhill Horticulture program has constructed and decorated fresh evergreen holiday wreaths as part of OCI’s Restorative Justice Program. The focus of the wreath project is to “generate support for local non-profit organizations whose primary objective is advocacy for and support to survivors of sexual/domestic violence and abuse in our community” said Jason Garlynd, OCI horticulture instructor. Over the years the wreaths have come to decorate the State Capitol Building, the Governor’s Executive Residence and many private homes and businesses. For the last two years order forms have been available on the myDOC site with pick up available at either Oakhill or a one time delivery to DOC’s Central Office. Expanding the availability of the evergreen wreaths has resulted in an increase in the proceeds generated by this project for charities.

A total of $4,035 was given to three Madison charities on July 12th. Warden Daniel Westfield and Deputy Secretary Deidre Morgan presented checks to Elizabeth Klaus from Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, Kelly Moe Litke from the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and Kelly Douglas from the Rape Crisis Center of Dane County. Warden Westfield recognized the vital services provided by these agencies to individuals and families of Madison and Dane County.

The horticulture program at OCI is certified through Madison College. Students who participate in the horticulture program learn a broad range of concepts and skills relevant to careers in the “Green” Industry. The students are enrolled in classes covering seasonally relevant topics like Turf, Landscape Maintenance and Design, Greenhouse Operations and Interiorscaping to name some.

In addition to the diploma level curriculum which allows men to earn a less than one year certificate in Horticulture there are other ways for the inmates to increase their qualifications to help them gain employment. They can obtain a Pesticide Applicator Certification through a training course created by the University of Wisconsin Extension and the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, as well as on the job training after graduation through the Apprenticeship Program contracted through the Department of Workforce Development.

Jason Garlynd (horticulture instructor), Kelly Douglas, Kelly Moe Litke, Elizabeth Klaus, Warden Westfield, Jack Rice (Education Director).
UWSP Poetry Project Helps Juveniles Make Positive Changes

The UW-Stevens Point Poetry Project started with adjudicated boys at Lincoln Hills School (LHS) seventeen years ago. In the fall of 2012, the Poetry Project expanded its program to include the adjudicated girls from Copper Lake School (CLS). Since the start of the project, each semester an anthology of poems entitled “Rising Voices” has been published with works that were submitted by the students who participated during the poetry sessions that semester. Currently, the UWSP publishing department publishes a separate book of poems for Copper Lake and Lincoln Hills Schools. Each student submitting at least one poem for publication receives two copies of the anthology.

The Poetry Project was begun in the spring of 1996 by Erika Hall. She said that she had been incarcerated at LHS at the age of fifteen, before it transitioned into an all-boys’ institution. When Erika was asked why she started the Poetry Project she replied, “I never went past eighth grade and I was in trouble as a kid. What helped me keep going and eventually start over was literacy. I kept reading, writing and learning on my own during those troubled years.”

While studying at UWSP, Erika began thinking about finding a way to help students at LHS develop an interest in reading and writing through poetry. In the spring of 1996, Erika Hall approached UWSP Professor Donna Decker with a request to start a poetry group at LHS. Erika offered her $200 poetry award as a catalyst to fund the endeavor. Erika stated, “I wanted the Poetry Project to be a volunteer activity, so the students at LHS would know that UWSP college students cared enough to take time for them without being paid to do it.”

During the past seventeen years of the UWSP Poetry Project, UWSP college student volunteers and LHS and now CLS staff have heard adjudicated juvenile delinquents state that they would like to begin to make positive changes, so they can turn their lives around through their written words. In addition, the Poetry Project has provided an outlet for students to express their feelings and has assisted students to understand that other people care, support, and want to guide them to find their own worth and eventually become productive members of society. Furthermore, it has provided UWSP college student volunteers an opportunity to work with challenging students and develop their own leadership skills.

by: Annette Crass, UWSP

Western Program One of Three Selected

Western Technical College has a new initiative to help inmates transition to life outside of jail. Western received a nearly $292,000 grant from the Federal Department of Education to aid a program geared toward helping inmates re-enter the community through education and social services.

For 15 years Western has provided educational opportunities in the jail but a new grant, called Positive Re-entry Offered through Vocation- and Education-focused Narratives or PROVEN, goes beyond classes in jail.

Clifton just got his high school diploma, but he didn't take the typical route to graduation. "Partying, drinking and stuff, I got in some trouble ended up in jail. I did six months in jail," Clifton said. He used those six months to get back on track, getting his GED and utilizing Western Technical College's PROVEN program.

"People coming out of jail, while they're in, will receive employability training through our education program and learn how to use the services that are available to them as they enter back into the
community," said Chad Dull, Dean of Learner Support and Transition at Western. "The intention of the grant is successful re-entry and for Western, hopefully transition to educational programs here."

To reduce the rate of re-offending, Western works not only with the LaCrosse County Jail but also other programs and groups like the YWCA, Justice Sanctions and Workforce Connections. "Helping participants identify the resources that are in the community — like helping them find housing if they have a felony or helping them maintain their sobriety in whatever capacity that looks like for those individuals — that's definitely a huge part of this program," said Tonya Vantol, PROVEN project coordinator.

Clifton says the program could reach a lot of inmates. "It can help people not just as young as me, but people older too," Clifton said. "Everybody needs help sometimes. People mess up and I feel like Western is a good way to get back on your feet."

But it's not just the inmates and ex-offenders reaping the benefits of Western's program. The PROVEN Grant is working for the greater good of the community. "It's a fair question about why invest in people when they're in jail. It's always more cost effective to make sure people don't go back to jail," Dull said. "This is a way to turn tax users in to tax payers. This is an investment in our community."

While the PROVEN grant is still in its infancy, there are already success stories like Clifton's. "I'm doing so well. I'm not hanging out with the same crowd, I'm not partying anymore. So I feel like, what can stop me?" Clifton got out of jail a couple of weeks ago and is still utilizing the PROVEN program. He began classes at Western on Aug 29th.

There were over 80 programs throughout the nation that applied for the grant with Western being one of just three selected. Western is the only program that serves a jail. The other two assist prison populations.

by: Kristen Barbaresi, Multimedia Journalist reprinted with permission from the www.wxow.com website

11th Annual CEA-W Creativity Contest

Once again, CEA-Wisconsin invites incarcerated writers and artists to submit their works for the eleventh annual edition of the CEA-Wisconsin Creativity Contest. Each year CEA-W publishes original prose, poetry, and ink drawings from Wisconsin's jail, prison, and juvenile facility populations. All levels of writers and artists are encouraged to offer submissions. Authors and artists whose works are selected will each receive two free copies of the booklet when it is published in May.

Encourage your learners to express themselves in drawings (black ink on 8½ by 11 white paper) and writings up to 1000 words including poems, letters, essays, and short stories. Winners are selected from all levels, so urge beginning writers to give it a try. Submissions are accepted between September 1st and December 1st. Please ask entrants to read the contest rules and fill out the submission form legibly. Entries can be sent to Libby Kraft at the Wisconsin Resource Center address on the submission form.

Members of the Creativity Contest Committee are Nancy Alderton (OSCI), Margaret Done (REECE), Laurie Jarvis (FVTC), Libby Kraft (WRC), Linda Lentz (JBCC), Pandora Lobacz (LHS), Tim Mahoney (WRC), Sharon Nesemann (WRC), Laura Riel (OCI), and Mary Stierna (WRC).

The booklets are typeset by inmates at Taycheedah Correctional Institution and printed by inmates at Columbia Correctional Institution. This publication reflects the professional commitment of CEA-Wisconsin members to promote literacy. Each CEA-W member gets a free copy of the booklet. If you want to join the committee, contact Mary Stierna at mary.stierna@wisconsin.gov.

See pages 8 & 9 for Contest Rules and the Submission Release Form.
CEA-Wisconsin Creativity Contest Rules

1. Entries are limited to writers who are incarcerated in prisons, juvenile facilities, and county jails located in Wisconsin. People in alternative correctional programs such as bracelet monitoring, probation, or parole are not eligible.

2. All entries must be the original work of the entrant. Plagiarism, copying someone else’s work and claiming it as your own, is against the law and is not acceptable!

3. Submission emphasis will be placed on those enrolled in educational programs. Special needs students who have received high school diplomas but have skill levels at the basic education level are encouraged to apply.

4. Artwork must be black ink on white paper and allow for at least a one-inch margin around a standard 8.5 x 11” page. Wider and darker lines allow for better reproduction. Photocopies are allowed, but the teacher or representative must see the original work at the time of submission.

5. Writing is judged on voice, organization, and creativity. Any form of writing is acceptable: poems, essays, short stories, letters, etc. Writing can be as short as one paragraph, but should not exceed 1,000 words. Entries must be typed, double-spaced, with a maximum of 2 pages.

6. Only one submission for each category, art and writing, will be accepted from each entrant.

7. The following release form must accompany the entry. The instructor is responsible for explaining that the work will undergo the usual editing process which any publication undergoes. All writing technicalities (punctuation, grammar) will be corrected. Instructors are advised not to correct students’ work. Assistance in writing should include suggestions for expanding ideas, development of themes, and organization. Over-correcting by instructors interferes with the voice of the writer. Entries may be reviewed locally by the Education Director or by DOC Central Office for appropriateness and security consideration as needs and policies dictate.

8. Entries must be signed by the Education Department contact person and received at the address on the release form by December 1, 2013. Winners will receive publications by May 2014. No submissions will be returned. Writers whose work is not accepted will not be notified.

9. The writer should include an address where he/she can be contacted in May 2014. The institutional address can be listed, provided the student agrees to contact the instructor in May about contest results. For jail programs, booklets will be sent to the institutional address in care of the Education Department Contact Person, as listed on the form, for distribution to winners.

10. Writers retain copyright to their work. CEA-W has first publication rights and rights to the collection of work. Winners will receive two copies of the book. No payment for published work will be provided.

11. Students may have their essays published anonymously. The release form, however, must contain the student’s real name and signature. This information will be used by contest coordinator only and kept confidential. Write “anonymous” or use initials (no pseudonyms, please) on the writing submitted, and staple the two together.

12. Illegible submission forms or entries may be disqualified.

To join CEA go to: www.ceanational.org
SUBMISSIONS RELEASE FORM
Correctional Education Association - Wisconsin
“Creativity Contest 2013”

Libby Kraft
Wisconsin Resource Center
PO Box 16, Winnebago, WI 54985-0016
Elizabeth.Kraft@dhs.wisconsin.gov (920) 426-4310 ext. 4410

I hereby give the CEA–W permission to publish the following work(s), if selected for the contest publication. These works are my original, unpublished writings and/or artwork. I understand that the selections may be minimally edited. I further understand that after publication all rights will return to me, however, original works will not be returned. The titles of the works submitted (maximum two) are listed below:

A. Title(s): May submit only one (1) of each category.

B. CEA–W will send each person whose work was selected two copies of the book. Please clearly print your full name and mailing address as of May 2014. Illegible submission forms may result in disqualified entries.

(Full Name) __________________________________________ (Inmate Number) __________

(Mailing address – Street Address) __________________________________________ (Institution where currently residing)

(Mailing address – City, State, Zip) __________________________________________

☐ Check here if this is a juvenile facility.

C. On the line below, please print the way you would like your name to appear in the book if selected. You may only use your institution name, first name with last initial, initials only, or anonymous. No aliases.

(PRINT your name, initials, or anonymous)

D. Sign and date. By signing I verify that these works are my original, unpublished writings and/or artwork.

(Signature) __________________________ (Date) __________

E. Education Department Contact Person. (For county jails, the contact person will be responsible for distributing booklets to winning authors.)

(Signature) __________________________ (Facility) __________

(Print Name) __________________________ (Contact Info -- Phone or Email)

Please circle one: Jr/Sr High School (DJC) ABE Intermediate HSED Post High School

NOTE: This form must accompany all submissions. Incomplete or incorrect submissions forms may disqualify the entry. Submissions must be sent to Libby Kraft, WRC, by December 1, 2013.
President’s Message

The emphasis this past week has been on “back to school” as children and college students prepare for a new academic year. I found this theme carried into my role as an educator this week when I read the affirming article on the front page of this newsletter.

Studies prove that what we do matters! Correctional education can be life changing for those in our classrooms. Correctional education is cost effective, reduces recidivism, and increases employment chances upon release. Students who are working hard to finish the current GED series by year’s end have this “back to school” excitement. And I feel it in myself in trying to learn all I can about the new 2014 series. As we focus on the year end push to have students complete the GED tests, and begin to prepare for the GED 2014, remember that what you do matters!

Mary
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Learn All About CEA-Wisconsin at:
www.ceawisconsin.org

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