From the Classroom to the Community

Exploring the Role of Education during Incarceration and Reentry

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Introduction

Education, Incarceration, and Reentry

The United States now has both the highest incarceration rate and the largest total number of people behind bars of any country in the world: 2.3 million. For the first time in U.S. history, more than one in every 100 adults is currently incarcerated in jail or prison (The Pew Charitable Trusts 2008). The impact of this level of incarceration is acutely concentrated within particular communities, classes, and racial groups. In 2005, the national incarceration rate for whites was 412 per 100,000, compared with 2,290 per 100,000 for blacks and 742 per 100,000 for Hispanics (Mauer and King 2007). Recent studies demonstrate that young black men, particularly those without college educations, are the population most affected by incarceration (The Pew Charitable Trusts 2008; Western 2006).

Nearly 95 percent of the nation's incarcerated population will eventually be released and will return home to communities across the country (Travis 2005). This year alone, more than 700,000 people will leave state and federal prison (West and Sabol 2008) and more than 9 million individuals will cycle in and out of local jails (Solomon et al. 2008). When they are released, many of these individuals will return to some of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the country (La Vigne, Cowan, and Brazzell 2006; Lynch and Sabol 2001). They will confront serious challenges as they struggle to reconnect with their families and neighbors and become productive members of

Inmates would like to have the same educational opportunities as people on the streets. Exercising our minds with healthy educational opportunities and preparing ourselves to transition back into society is . . . important for everyone.

— FRANK, A STUDENT INCARCERATED IN VIRGINIA

society. The likelihood of these individuals returning to criminal activity is high: within three years of release, 68 percent of people released from state and federal prison are rearrested and over half return to prison (Langan and Levin 2002). Identifying effective strategies for reintegrating the thousands of men and women who return home from prison and jail each year is critical not only for them, but also for the health and stability of their families and the safety and well-being of their communities. Given the potential impact on public safety, community well-being, and criminal justice budgets, prisoner reintegration should be an important priority for national, state, and local governments.

While there has been increasing discussion about the intersection of prisoner reentry and issues of workforce development, housing, health, and public safety, insufficient attention has been paid to the role that in-prison and post-prison education can play in facilitating successful reentry. Education has been widely recognized as a pathway to assimilation and economic mobility for immigrant and other disadvantaged populations throughout U.S. history (Isaacs, Sawhill, and Haskins 2008). For people involved in the criminal justice system, education offers a path to increased employment, reduced recidivism, and improved quality of life (Gaes 2008).

Access to education is particularly important given current economic trends. Economists predict that the labor market will tighten in the next decade and that labor market inequality, particularly among unskilled workers, will continue to grow if the demands for skilled labor are not met (Holzer and Nightingale 2007). An ever-increasing share of jobs in the U.S. economy requires postsecondary preparation, and college-educated workers earn 26 to 36 percent more than individuals who have not attended college (Decker et al. 1997). If properly designed and implemented, education programs in correctional facilities and communities can provide individuals involved in the criminal justice system with the academic instruction, vocational training, and cognitive and life skills they need to succeed in today's economy.

Despite its potential for changing lives, high-quality education is not readily accessible to many people involved in the justice system. Adults returning from prison and jail and those on community supervision are still overwhelmingly undereducated compared with the general population, with lower levels of formal educational attainment and poorer performance on tests of basic literacy (Crayton and Neusteter 2008). Fortunately, opportunities to address the educational needs of criminal justice populations may expand as policymakers increasingly recognize the limitations of the nation's narrow approach to crime and public safety issues. The passage of the federal Second Chance Act in April 2008, for example, indicates a remarkable shift in the political will to address the challenges facing currently and formerly incarcerated individu-

als and encourage their potential to contribute to society.[1] Instead of threatening community safety and draining economic resources, formerly incarcerated people with educational preparation and other supports can provide for themselves and their families and contribute to the economic and social well-being of their communities.

The Reentry Roundtable on Education

Recognizing the pressing need to explore the issues surrounding education, incarceration, and reentry, the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Urban Institute hosted the Reentry Roundtable on Education on March 31 and April 1, 2008, at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. The two-day meeting examined the current state of education during incarceration and reentry and identified promising programmatic and policy directions. Twenty-nine individuals participated in the Roundtable, along with more than 100 observers. As a starting point for the discussion, seven papers were commissioned on various topics related to the intersection of education, incarceration, and reentry. A list of the papers and the meeting participants can be found in the text boxes on pages 4 and 5. The Roundtable also benefited from the input of several incarcerated students with whom the papers were shared before the event. The students provided comments, suggestions for discussion, and questions that were shared with the Roundtable participants during the sessions. Comments from the incarcerated students as well as the Roundtable attendees are included throughout this monograph.

Monograph Roadmap

The Reentry Roundtable on Education provided a valuable opportunity to assess the state of knowledge and practice and identify promising new approaches, issues of concern, and opportunities for collaboration and innovation. This monograph synthesizes the findings of the Roundtable papers and

> The whole enterprise of correctional education—the teachers, the volunteers, the classrooms, the books, the computers—helps humanize correctional facilities and plays a key role in relieving inmate stress and frustration by focusing incarcerated individuals on positive and constructive activities and relationships. Students benefit directly from these programs by improving their skills and knowledge, and staff—particularly correctional officers—benefit from working with individuals who are more cooperative and better adjusted to their circumstances. More than that, educational programs help elevate the mission and professionalism of corrections from one of warehousing individuals to one of preparing individuals for their futures.
>
> — Stefan LoBuglio, Chief of Pre-Release and Reentry Services, Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Correction and Rehabilitation

[1] Erik Eckholm, "U.S. Shifting Prison Focus to Re-entry Into Society," *New York Times*, April 8, 2008.

the discussion generated throughout the sessions. It offers examples of innovative strategies being employed across the country to provide high-quality services, and it aims to contextualize correctional education within broader trends in the fields of education and criminal justice. Although the intent is to explore education during both incarceration and reentry, much of the material in the monograph focuses on correctional education because research on education for former prisoners in the community is limited.

To begin, the monograph surveys the current landscape of correctional education, discussing both the educational needs of people involved in the criminal justice system and the programs being provided to meet those needs. It then reviews research on the effectiveness of correctional education and guiding principles for effective programming, as well as gaps in the research literature. The subsequent section discusses the issues involved in providing education in correctional settings and identifies some potential responses to these challenges. The monograph then explores education during reentry and the connections between educational programs provided during incarceration and educational and employment opportunities available in the community. The report closes by looking to the future and highlighting key issues and new directions in research, policy, and practice.

Roundtable Papers

Seven commissioned papers were presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education and findings from the papers were incorporated into this monograph. The papers are available online at http://www.urban.org/projects/reentry-roundtable/roundtable10.cfm and at http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/centersandinstitutes/pri/1932.php.

- *The Current State of Correctional Education*, by Anna Crayton and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter
- *The Impact of Prison Education Programs on Post-Release Outcomes*, by Gerald G. Gaes
- *Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs*, by Doris Layton MacKenzie
- *Understanding and Responding to the Education Needs of Special Populations in Adult Corrections*, by Peter E. Leone, Michael Wilson, and Michael P. Krezmien
- *The Effective Use of Technology in Correctional Education*, by Cindy Borden and Penny Richardson
- *Prison-Based Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Post-Release Labor Market Outcomes*, by Rosa Cho and John Tyler
- *Prison Postsecondary Education: Bridging Learning from Incarceration to the Community*, by Jeanne Contardo and Michelle Tolbert

Video recordings of two Roundtable sessions are also available online, at http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/reentry/part1 and http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/reentry/part2.

- "Bridging Learning from Incarceration to the Community," presented by Jeanne Contardo and Michelle Tolbert
- "Race, Poverty and Education: Intersections with Incarceration and Reentry," presented by Bruce Western and Ted Shaw

Roundtable Participants

Twenty-nine individuals participated in the Roundtable, including policymakers, practitioners, and researchers representing the criminal justice and education fields.

Steve Aos, Associate Director, Washington State Institute for Public Policy
Jimmy Santiago Baca, Founder, Cedar Tree, Inc.
James T. Barry, President, Mount Marty College
Joe Baumann, Chapter President, California Rehabilitation Center, California Correctional Peace Officers Association
Theodis Beck, Secretary, North Carolina Department of Correction
Onaje Benjamin, Transition Counselor, Dutchess County Jail Transition Program
Cindy Borden, Cofounder, Northstar Correctional Education Services
Nancy Compton, Principal, Charles A. Jones Skill Center
Jeanne Contardo, Director of Programs, Business-Higher Education Forum
Mindy Feldbaum, Director of Workforce Development Programs, National Institute for Work and Learning
Brian Fischer, Commissioner, New York State Department of Correctional Services
Gerry Gaes, Visiting Researcher, College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Florida State University
Kathy Goebel, Program Administrator, Corrections Education, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Jodina Hicks, Vice President of Public Policy and Community Partnerships, Safer Foundation
J. Scott Johnston, Chief State Supervisor, Division of Parole and Probation, Missouri Department of Corrections
Cheryl Keenan, Director, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, United States Department of Education
Peter Leone, Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Maryland, College Park
Jody Lewen, Director, Prison University Project
Stefan LoBuglio, Chief of Pre-Release and Reentry Services, Pre-Release Center, Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation
Doris Mackenzie, Professor of Criminology, University of Maryland, College Park
John Nally, Director of Education, Indiana Department of Correction
Vivian Nixon, Executive Director, College and Community Fellowship
Steve Schwalb, President and CEO, Pioneer Human Services
Steve Steurer, Executive Director, Correctional Education Association
Michelle Tolbert, Associate Director of Adult Education and Literacy, MPR Associates
Jeremy Travis, President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Facilitator)
John Tyler, Associate Professor of Education and Public Policy, Brown University
Reginald Wilkinson, President and CEO, Ohio College Access Network
Jeanne Woodford, Chief Adult Probation Officer, San Francisco County Adult Probation Department

(*Note:* Individuals are listed with their titles and affiliations at the time of the Roundtable.)

The Current Landscape of Education during Incarceration and Reentry

People involved in the criminal justice system are significantly less educated than the general population, as measured by both formal educational attainment and educational performance. Justice-involved individuals typically have lower literacy levels than the general population and are less likely to have a high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate or to have received any postsecondary education. Many prisons and jails offer education programs in an attempt to address these disparities, although typically only a portion of inmates actually receives programming. Commonly available correctional education programs include academic instruction at all levels, special education courses for students with disabilities, and vocational training and life skills programs that provide concrete skills. This section examines the educational needs of individuals involved in the criminal justice system, the programs available to meet those needs, and the funding sources used to finance education for this population.[2]

[2] In their paper for the Roundtable, "The Current State of Correctional Education," Anna Crayton and Suzanne Neusteter (2008) thoroughly review much of the information covered in this section.

TABLE 1 Formal Educational Attainment by Population (percent)

Population	Less than high school	High school diploma	GED	Any postsecondary
General population (2003)	19	26	5	51
Federal prisoners (2004)	26	17	29	27
State prisoners (2004)	37	17	32	14
Jail inmates (2002)	44	26	17	13
State parolees (1999)	51	42		7
State/local probationers (1995)	42	40		18

Sources: For general population, Greenberg, Dunleavy, and Kutner (2007); federal and state prison, Crayton and Neusteter (2008); jail, James (2004); state parole, Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001); and state and local probation, Bonczar (1997).

Note: Data for state and federal prisoners, jail inmates, and parolees represent educational level at prison intake. The general population comprises adults age 16 and older.

The Need for Education: Prisoner Profile

The disparities in educational attainment between incarcerated individuals and the general population are striking (table 1), though the gap has recently been narrowing. In 1997, 61 percent of state and federal prisoners and 82 percent of the general population had high school diplomas or GEDs (Harlow 2003). By 2003–04, 65 percent of prisoners had diplomas or GEDs, while the rate among the general population held steady at 82 percent (Crayton and Neusteter 2008; Greenberg, Dunleavy, and Kutner 2007). The growth in high school or equivalent educational attainment among prisoners has primarily been in GEDs. Between 1997 and 2004, the share of prisoners with GEDs increased from 28 to 31 percent, while the share with high school diplomas declined by nearly 5 percentage points (Harlow 2003; Crayton and Neusteter 2008).[3] Further, 7 in 10 prisoners who had a GED reported obtaining it while in prison (Crayton and Neusteter 2008). These statistics suggest that a GED is increasingly the vehicle by which incarcerated individuals obtain high school credentials, although obtaining a GED typically provides a different educational experience than attending and graduating from high school.

The largest disparity in educational attainment between prisoners and the general population has been and continues to be in postsecondary education, with a gap that is almost twice that of high school/GED attainment. In 2004, 17 percent of state and federal prisoners had some level of postsecondary education, up from 12 percent in 1997 but still far behind the rate of 51 percent among the general population (Crayton and Neusteter 2008; Greenberg et al. 2007; Harlow 2003). According to former U.S.

[3] These statistics do not include individuals who had gone beyond their high school attainment to obtain postsecondary education.

Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, "90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education or training" (Spellings 2007). As GED completion rates among prisoners continue to rise and a college degree becomes increasingly essential in the U.S. job market, the case for providing postsecondary educational opportunities to prisoners becomes more compelling.

Data on educational attainment among jail inmates and individuals on probation and parole are much more limited and less recent. Like state and federal prisoners, these populations are significantly less educated than the general U.S. population (table 1). Jail inmates, state parolees, and people on state or local probation are also less likely to have completed high school than state and federal prisoners (although the figures for jail inmates, parolees, and probationers are less recent and may have changed). Historical data indicate that, as with state and federal prisoners, education levels have increased among jail inmates and state parolees over the past several years (historical data are not available for people on probation).[4] These gains were primarily in the share of individuals receiving a high school diploma or GED; unlike state and federal prisoners, jail inmates and state parolees did not see increased rates of postsecondary education.

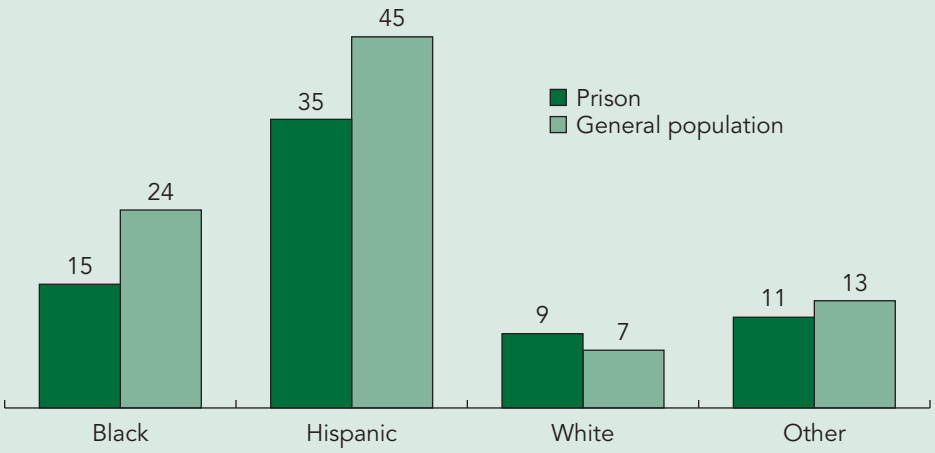
Incarcerated individuals lag behind the general population not only in formal educational attainment, but also in educational performance and abilities. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), people who are incarcerated have lower literacy rates than those who are not. The NAAL attempts to measure individuals' abilities to "us[e] printed and written information to function in society, to achieve [their] goals, and to develop [their] knowledge and potential," and it assesses literacy in three areas: prose, document, and quantitative (Greenberg et al. 2007). State and federal prisoners score significantly lower than the general population in all three domains, although prisoner scores did improve between 1992 and 2003. Some of the most interesting findings from the 2003 NAAL are the trends within racial groups. Unlike white prisoners, black and Hispanic adult prisoners had *better* literacy scores in some areas than black and Hispanic adults in the general population (see figure 1 for an example). This is an interesting and unexpected finding, but it has not yet been confirmed by other studies.[5]

Another important facet of the educational profile of the incarcerated population is the high prevalence of learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, and mental illness. These issues frequently go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed and untreated or improperly treated, which is part of the reason many incarcerated individuals have had difficulty succeeding in the public education system in the past. Unfortunately the same problem often occurs within correctional facilities, as evidenced by the lack of

[4] James (2004) documents educational attainment among jail inmates in 1996 and 2002. Hughes and colleagues (2001) address attainment among people on state parole in 1990 and 1999.

[5] There are some methodological issues with the NAAL study that make interpreting these findings difficult. Individuals who are not literate in English or who have cognitive or mental disabilities that prevent them from being tested are not included in the NAAL sample. It is possible that illiteracy and disability rates—and thus the rate of exclusion from the study—among the incarcerated population differ from rates among the general population.

FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS SCORING AT BELOW-BASIC LEVEL IN PROSE LITERACY, BY INCARCERATION STATUS AND RACE, 2003



Source: 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (Greenberg et al. 2007).

reliable data on the number and types of disabilities among inmates. Most correctional systems do not maintain data on special needs individuals, and often the numbers they have are grossly underestimated owing to low diagnosis rates (Leone, Wilson, and Krezmien 2008). The only existing national figures come from self-reported data from inmate surveys. In the 2003 NAAL survey, 17 percent of incarcerated individuals reported being diagnosed with some type of learning disability, compared with 6 percent of the general population (Greenberg et al. 2007). According to Harlow (2003), 40 percent of state prisoners report having a disability of some type, including 10 percent who report having a learning disability. Both these studies, however, are based on self-reported diagnoses and may not be accurate.

In a more rigorous study, Krezmien and colleagues assess more than 500 boys in a juvenile facility and find that 45 percent have a disability (Krezmien, Mulcahy, and Leone 2008). Of those with a disability, 44 percent have an emotional disturbance and 26 percent have a learning disability. While none of the studies just described provide a definitive answer regarding disability rates among the nation's incarcerated population, they indicate a high prevalence of learning disabilities and other special needs and suggest that more accurate data are needed.

Access to Education during Incarceration and Reentry

The statistics outlined in the previous section clearly indicate a need for educational services among the incarcerated population. Several types of programs exist to meet

this need, including academic instruction from the most basic levels to the more advanced, as well as practically oriented trainings such as vocational and life skills. The array of programs typically included under the umbrella of correctional education[6] can be categorized as follows:

- *Adult Basic Education (ABE):* Basic skills training in arithmetic, reading, writing, and, when needed, English as a second language (ESL).
- *Adult Secondary Education:* Instruction to complete high school or prepare for a certificate of high school equivalency, usually the GED.
- *Postsecondary Education:* Advanced, college-level instruction that in some cases may provide college credit.
- *Special Education:* Educational training designed for individuals who have learning disabilities or other special needs.
- *Vocational Education:* Training in general employment skills as well as skills for specific jobs and/or industries.
- *Life Skills Education:* Programs that focus on providing individuals with the skills needed to function successfully in everyday life, in areas such as goal-setting and decisionmaking, obtaining and maintaining a job, financial management, communication and interpersonal relationships, stress and anger management, and conflict resolution (Crayton and Neusteter 2008).

Most (84 percent) state prisons offer some type of correctional education program, and nearly all (98 percent) federal prisons offer a full range of programs (table 2). (Note that, even in the facilities that offer programming, only a portion of inmates are receiving these services.) In state prisons, adult basic and secondary education and life skills programs are the most common offerings, followed by vocational training. Postsecondary offerings are less common, as are special education programs. Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of state prisons offering programming shrank in every category except postsecondary and life skills programs, which expanded (Stephan 2008; Stephan and Karberg 2003).

Compared with state and federal prisons, far fewer local jails offer educational programming, likely because of limited resources and the difficulty of providing programming to individuals in custody for short and unpredictable periods. In 1999, 60 percent of local jails offered some type of educational programming. As in state prisons, the most common offerings were adult basic and secondary education and life skills programs. Special education was less common, and postsecondary and vocational programs were rare.

Although the statistics outlined here document the prevalence of different types of programming, they tell us nothing about what the programs actually look like on the ground. Program curricula and methods, staffing and quality of instruction, participa-

[6] For the purposes of this report, programs that attempt to improve individuals' thinking skills using cognitive behavioral methods are not considered correctional education but instead fall under the domain of counseling and treatment.

TABLE 2 Availability of Correctional Education Programs by Type

	% of facilities offering programs		
	Federal prisons (2005)	State prisons (2005)	Local jails (1999)
Any correctional education program	98	84	60
Adult basic education	98	66	25
Adult secondary education	98	76	55
Postsecondary education	98	32	3
Special education	98	33	11
Vocational training	98	50	6
Life skills	98	77	21

Sources: For federal and state prisons, Stephan (2008); for jails, Stephan (2001).

Note: The statistics for "Any correctional education program" include some types of programs not listed in this table, such as ESL and study release, and do not include life skills programs.

tion and completion rates, and other components vary widely from program to program and facility to facility. For example, some correctional education programs meet once a week while others meet five days a week for six to eight hours a day. Unfortunately, little national data are available beyond the number of programs offered by facilities within each category of programming.

Though the vast majority of state and federal prisons and a significant number of jails offer some type of educational programs, only a limited share of inmates in these facilities receive programming. As of 2004, the share of state and federal prisoners who received programming during their current incarceration was highest—between 20 and 30 percent—for adult secondary education and vocational and life skills training (table 3). (Note that the categories of programming are not mutually exclusive; for example, an inmate student may be engaged in both adult secondary education and vocational training.) Interestingly, although adult basic education is offered in most prisons and some jails, few inmates (less than 2 percent) receive these services. The NAAL literacy scores outlined in the previous section suggest that a greater share of inmates may need basic education than are receiving it.

The share of state prisoners receiving educational programming during their current incarceration decreased slightly between 1997 and 2004, with the largest drops occurring in vocational training (a decrease of 5 percentage points) and adult secondary education (a decrease of 4 percentage points) (Crayton and Neusteter 2008; Harlow 2003).[7] During this time, the prison population expanded so rapidly that although participation rates fell, the actual number of inmates receiving educational programming may have

[7] Historical data on participation in life skills programs are not available.

TABLE 3 Involvement in Correctional Education Programs by Type

	% of inmates who received programming since admission to prison, by facility type		
	Federal prisons (2004)	State prisons (2004)	Local jails (1996)
Adult basic education	2	2	1
Adult secondary education	21	19	9
Postsecondary education	10	7	1
Special education	–	–	–
Vocational training	31	27	5
Life skills	29	24	–

Sources: For federal and state prisons, Crayton and Neusteter (2008); for jails, Harlow (2003).

increased. The reason for stagnant or declining participation rates is unclear, but what is clear is that inmate engagement in educational programming has not grown alongside the expanding prison population.

In a number of jurisdictions, participation in certain types of educational programming is mandatory for inmates who have not reached a specified level of achievement. In 1982, the Federal Bureau of Prisons adopted the first policy mandating participation in educational programming for inmates below a certain level (McGlone 2002). After this change, participation rates increased significantly.[8] As of 2007, 16 state systems required GED attainment, and a 2002 study found that 12 states required completion of the equivalent of 6th grade (Corrections Compendium 2008; McGlone 2002).

The discussion thus far has centered on education inside correctional facilities, primarily because little data are available on the involvement of formerly incarcerated individuals in educational programs in the community. Recent findings from the Urban Institute's Returning Home study of 740 men released from prison in Illinois, Texas, and Ohio shed some light on participation in programming in the community (Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008). Six percent of respondents reported participating in an adult basic education or GED program and 11 percent participated in a vocational training program at any time in the first eight months after release. The low participation rates may be due to a lack of available programs or a lack of awareness about program opportunities on the part of potential participants (in addition, some individuals may not need these particular programs, for example, if they already have a GED). Less than 20 percent of respondents reported knowing of available adult basic education or GED programs and vocational training programs in their communities. On the other hand, low rates of

[8] Stefan LoBuglio, Chief of Pre-Release and Reentry Services, Montgomery County (Maryland) Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, e-mail communication with the authors, April 2, 2009.

participation may also result from the many competing demands faced by former prisoners, from earning income to fulfilling supervision requirements, which may take precedence over obtaining education. A 2006 survey of incarcerated men also suggests that access to programming may be an issue. The survey found that while over 90 percent of respondents reported they would like to attend a technical school or college after release if given the opportunity, less than 40 percent actually had plans to do so (Hanneken and Dannerbeck 2007).

Funding for Correctional Education

Funding for correctional education comes from several sources and varies from system to system. At the state level, funding may come from general fund appropriations to state departments of corrections, labor, or education, or special revenue sources such as "inmate welfare" funds or prison industry profits. States can also access various sources of federal funding to be used for education in state prisons and in some cases jails. Federal funding sources include

- funding for adult basic and secondary education, English literacy classes, and special education under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), one of the largest federal sources of financial support for correctional education;
- money for vocational and technical training through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act;
- grants for academic and vocational postsecondary education through the Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Individuals State grant;
- funding geared toward juveniles and incarcerated youth (up to age 21 in some cases) such as the Title I State Agency Neglected and Delinquent Program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and
- funds for educating youth (up to age 21) with disabilities from The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Crayton and Neusteter 2008; Tolbert 2002).

Private organizations and individuals have also been known to contribute funding, resources, and volunteer time to support the provision of correctional education programs (Corrections Compendium 2008; Crayton and Neusteter 2008).

A Brief History of Correctional Education

Education has had a consistent presence in correctional facilities over the past 200 years, though the form it has taken and the rationale behind its provision have changed over time. In 1798, education was introduced in the nation's first correctional facility—the Walnut Street Jail—in the context of religious instruction intended to help individuals repent for their crimes and develop spiritually and morally. The late 1800s marked the rise of the reformatory era, and educational offerings expanded beyond religious instruction to emphasize literacy and communication skills, as well as the inclusion of secular courses such as astronomy, geography, and history. Education was further entrenched within correctional institutions with the introduction of indeterminate sentences, which required evidence of self-improvement as a condition of release. Through the 1970s, often considered the "golden age" for rehabilitative programs, educational instruction proliferated, eventually including high school courses and GED preparation, vocational training in specific trades, life skills programs, academic higher education, and study release.

Sources: Coley and Barton (2006); Crayton and Neusteter (2008); Gehring (1997); MacKenzie (2008).

Differences in accounting among states and the range of funding streams used to pay for programs make it difficult to quantify state expenditures on correctional education (Klein et al. 2004). In a recent study of all state systems, state corrections agencies reported budgeting an average of $12 million annually for correctional education programs (this may not include correctional education funds managed by other agencies such as departments of education). The figure varied widely depending on the size of the system, from around $500,000 in some small state systems to over $67 million a year in Texas (Corrections Compendium 2008). An informal survey by the authors of seven state jurisdictions and one large urban jail found that these systems were typically spending approximately 1 to 3 percent of their corrections budgets on education. The jurisdictions reported a number of funding sources including general fund or state legislature monies, legislative member items, state departments of labor and education, federal grants, inmate welfare funds, and private or nonprofit sources.

As states face increased budget pressures, the amount spent on correctional education may drop, and there is less federal funding available than in the past to fill the gap. The trend in recent years has generally been toward reduced federal spending on education for incarcerated populations (see text box on the next page). For example, the Adult Basic Education Act previously required that *at least* 10 percent of its allocated funds be used for correctional education; the Workforce Investment Act that replaced it in 1998 states that now a *maximum* of 10 percent of the funds can be used for this purpose.

Perhaps the most widely discussed reductions in federal funding have been in postsecondary education, specifically the 1994 elimination of access to Pell Grants for students incarcerated in state and federal prisons.[9] Up to that point, Pell Grants had been the primary source of funding for higher education programs in correctional facilities. In the year following the ban, the number of incarcerated individuals receiving postsecondary education dropped 44 percent (Tewksbury, Ericson, and Taylor 2000). Some states responded by developing new funding streams or offering loan programs to fill the gap (Crayton and Neusteter 2008). A recent national assessment by Erisman and Contardo (2005) finds that the percentage of incarcerated individuals enrolled in postsecondary education has returned to pre-1994 levels. However, a much larger share of these students is now enrolled in vocational rather than academic courses.

[9] Pell Grants were not eliminated for people in jails or treatment centers (Erisman and Contardo 2005).

Trends in Federal Funding for Correctional Education

- In 1964, Title II B under the Economic Opportunity Act authorized the first federally funded adult basic education program through the Adult Basic Education Act (ABEA). The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), replaced the ABEA in 1998 and remains one of the largest sources of federal funding for correctional education. While ABEA required that a *minimum* of 10 percent of appropriated funds be used for correctional education, WIA changed this to a *maximum* of 10 percent. Because of the statutory language, in actuality only 8.25 percent of the total appropriation may be allocated to correctional education. In 2004, $30 million in WIA funding was allocated for programs in correctional facilities.
- The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act is another source of federal funding for correctional education programming. Before 1998, the Perkins Act required states to use a *minimum* of 1 percent of the funds toward correctional education programs. However, in 1998 the Perkins Act was amended and states can now spend *no more than* 1 percent of funds on correctional education.
- Federal funding streams are also available to states to fund postsecondary educational programs in correctional institutions. One such program is the Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Youth Offenders State grant, now the Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Individuals State grant. Once reserved for individuals age 25 and younger who were within five years of release, these funds have now been extended to include incarcerated individuals up to the age of 35 who are within seven years of release. Despite this expansion of eligibility, funding for the program was cut by 25 percent between 2008 and 2009.

Sources: Crayton and Neusteter (2008); Spangenberg (2004); Tolbert (2002); and John Linton, Director of the Office of Correctional Education, U.S. Department of Education, e-mail communication with the authors, April 3, 2009.

Research on the Effectiveness of Correctional Education

Research indicates that correctional education can reduce recidivism and increase employment after release from prison. Theory and anecdotal evidence suggest that education may also improve in-prison behavior and promote positive reentry outcomes beyond recidivism and employment. Education promotes rehabilitation in several ways, through tangible benefits such as formal certifications and concrete skills, as well as intangible gains like improved decisionmaking abilities and pro-social values. This section examines existing theory and research on the impact of correctional education on inmate students. It also explores principles of successful correctional and adult education programs that may help guide the development of correctional education program models.

Theoretical Foundations: The Purpose of Education During Incarceration and Reentry

There are several pathways by which education can improve outcomes for individuals both in prison and after release. Education improves decisionmaking skills and promotes pro-social thinking, thereby improving in-prison behavior and facilitating adjustment to prison. It keeps inmate students engaged and active, avoiding idleness and opportunities for misbehavior. Education also increases human capital, improving general cognitive functioning while providing specific skills. After release, these gains

can help people obtain and maintain employment and avoid engaging in criminal activity. Education can also help former prisoners build pro-social identities after release and become better family and community members. In addition to these positive outcomes, many people view education as an inherent right, a process that is valuable in and of itself, and an important component of a full and enjoyable life.

Education can improve in-prison behavior and promote reentry success by changing students' thinking patterns, attitudes, and behaviors. Research indicates that deficits in social cognition (understanding social interactions and the behavior of others), executive cognitive functioning (the ability to plan and implement goal-directed behavior), problem-solving abilities, and self-efficacy are all cognitive issues associated with criminal and antisocial behavior (Andrews and Bonta 2003; Foglia 2000; Giancola 2000; MacKenzie 2008). By enhancing cognitive abilities and decisionmaking skills, education can help formerly incarcerated people avoid criminal activity and engage in positive behavior. Many scholars believe that education can also increase pro-social attitudes and moral reasoning, improve self-esteem and self-efficacy, and help individuals develop a pro-social identity (Batiuk, Moke, and Rountree 1997; Fine et al. 2001; Harer 1995; Winterfield et al. forthcoming). These positive developments can serve as a direct counterweight to "prisonization," the process whereby people who are incarcerated become acculturated to the negative values of prison subculture (Harer 1995).

> Education in the prison setting provides far more than a degree and lower recidivism rates . . . Through its transformational powers, it provides for a socialization and self-actualization process that no other treatment program can offer. It allows offenders to better understand their own self-worth and potential, and most often has offenders reaching out to their own children to encourage them to continue their education.
>
> — Brian Fischer, Commissioner, New York State Department of Correctional Services

By expanding students' general abilities and providing specific skills, education can make it easier for returning prisoners to find stable, well-paying jobs. In addition, education has a signaling effect to employers, serving as a formal indicator of an individual's abilities and achievement (Gaes 2008). Formal educational attainment can combat the negative signaling effect of incarceration, whereby conviction and incarceration send a negative message to employers about an individual's character and abilities (Western 2007). The receipt of a GED, college degree, or vocational certificate is thus valuable not only for the skills and abilities developed in the course of receiving such certification but also for the certification itself. Education's effect on employment is particularly important because employment has been demonstrated to reduce recidivism among former prisoners (Harer 1994; Sampson and Laub 1997; Uggen 2000). Level of compensation also influences reentry outcomes, as those making higher wages are less likely to recidivate (Bernstein and Houston 2000; Grogger 1998; Visher et al. 2008). In addition to lowering recidivism rates, employment helps former prisoners support their families and pay child support and other debts.

In all likelihood, education affects incarcerated students in a number of ways, and disentangling all these pathways is challenging. Yet considering the mechanisms by which education may affect in-prison and reentry outcomes is valuable because it can help guide research on the effectiveness of correctional education. It can also influence the development of education programs, since a program's purpose and design are likely to vary depending on the outcomes the program is attempting to influence. For example, policymakers and correctional administrators concerned only with employability and economic outcomes might focus their programming on providing specific vocational skills. While valuable, such programming might miss the benefits that a liberal arts or other, more generalized curriculum could provide in improved cognitive functioning. All these programming decisions are complicated by the fact that incarcerated students have a range of needs, and programs that are successful for certain students may not be for others.

The Impact of Correctional Education on Student Outcomes

Research on the effectiveness of correctional education primarily focuses on two sets of outcomes: (1) recidivism, in terms of reoffending, rearrest, or reincarceration, and (2) employment-related measures such as labor market participation and wages (Gaes 2008). A handful of mostly qualitative studies have also explored the effect of correctional education on in-prison behavior and adjustment (see for example Fine et al. 2001 and Winterfield et al. forthcoming). Research examining reentry outcomes beyond employment and recidivism, such as pro-social attitudes, cognitive functioning, family relationships, and civic engagement, could provide a much fuller picture of the impact of correctional education. Unfortunately, the field lacks well-designed studies that address these outcomes. Also missing are evaluations of the impact of adult education provided in the community on outcomes for former prisoners, since many evaluations of these types of programs do not distinguish people with incarceration histories from other participants.

Although the field has not produced a clear understanding of the impact of correctional education on a full range of in-prison and post-release outcomes, there is fairly extensive research on the impact on recidivism and employment, which are often the outcomes of greatest concern to policymakers, criminal justice officials, and the public. Taken together, numerous studies suggest that correctional education can reduce recidivism and increase employment levels and wages. These positive effects have been found for a range of types of programming, including vocational training and adult basic, secondary, and postsecondary education (Gaes 2008).

In a review of the research literature for his Roundtable paper "The Impact of Prison Educational Programs on Post-Release Outcomes," Gerald Gaes (2008) finds that most meta-analyses and systematic reviews of research on the impact of correctional

The Financial Benefits of Correctional Education

$1,182 in vocational training	can save	$6,806 in future criminal justice costs
$962 in academic education	can save	$5,306 in future criminal justice costs

Source: Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006).

education indicate that it reduces recidivism and improves employment outcomes.[10] The true size of this effect is still unknown, however; across four meta-analyses identified by Gaes, reductions in recidivism ranged from 7 percent to 46 percent. Gaes concludes his review by stating that, despite the methodological issues present in several studies, "the takeaway message is that correctional education does promote successful prisoner reentry." Like Gaes, most researchers who conducted the meta-analyses and systematic reviews discussed in his paper concluded that there was enough evidence from well-designed studies to state that correctional education produces positive outcomes in terms of recidivism and employment. Some researchers, however, felt that there were too many methodological issues to draw definitive conclusions about the impact of correctional education; many of these methodological issues are discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Though we cannot state with certainty the magnitude of the impact of correctional education, a cost-benefit analysis by Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006) suggests that even a 7 to 9 percent reduction in recidivism can result in significant cost savings for taxpayers. Looking simply at the cost of programming versus the cost of incarceration, Aos and his coauthors report that $1,182 per prisoner invested in vocational training can save $6,806 in future criminal justice costs, and $962 per prisoner invested in academic education (adult basic, secondary, and postsecondary) can save $5,306 in criminal justice costs. If one considers the social benefits of avoiding victimization and the economic benefits from increasing the number of legally employed, taxpaying citizens, the savings are even greater.

[10] The meta-analyses reviewed by Gaes are from Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006); Chappell (2004); Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie (2000); and Ronald E. Wells, "Education as Prison Reform: A Meta-Analysis," unpublished dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2000. The systematic reviews and research summaries Gaes discusses include Cecil et al. (2000); Gerber and Fritsch (1995); Hrabowski and Robbi (2002); Jancic (1998); Jensen and Reed (2006); Taylor (1992); and Vacca (2004). Gaes also reviews individual studies and highlights the strongest evaluations in the field.

Principles of Effective Practice

The existing body of research has not advanced far enough to identify evidence-based best practices that are specific to education for criminal justice populations. Most evaluations of correctional education programs do not provide the information on program characteristics—such as curricula, dosage, and staffing—that is necessary to determine best practices (MacKenzie 2008). However, scholars have identified some general principles of effective practice in correctional programming more broadly (not specific to education) and adult education in the community (not specific to corrections) that may provide us with an indication of what works in correctional education.

The Importance of Program Dosage

In their paper for the Roundtable, "Prison-Based Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Post-Release Labor Market Outcomes," Rosa Cho and John Tyler (2008) emphasize the importance of program dosage. They find that individuals who participate in adult basic education have better employment outcomes than comparable nonparticipants, but only if they receive a certain minimum amount of programming. In addition, students experience better outcomes if there is little or no interruption in their program participation. These findings suggest that both quantity and continuity of programming are important factors in program effectiveness.

In her Roundtable paper "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs," Doris MacKenzie outlines best practices in programming for incarcerated populations (MacKenzie 2008). After conducting several systematic reviews of evaluations of correctional programs, MacKenzie has drawn some conclusions about what types of programs are most effective in reducing recidivism. She finds the following:

- The most effective programs emphasize individual rehabilitation through skills building, cognitive development, and behavioral change. By their very nature, many correctional education programs fit squarely within this framework. MacKenzie emphasizes that individual-level cognitive and behavioral change must be achieved before other activities can be of value.
- Multimodal programs that address multiple needs are highly effective, which suggests that, for many individuals, correctional education may need to occur in tandem with substance abuse treatment, cognitive-behavioral therapy, job preparation, and other activities. MacKenzie highlights program models, such as Vermont's Workforce Development Program and Texas's Project RIO, in which life skills, academic, and vocational education are embedded within multifaceted programs. Unfortunately, the evaluations of these types of programs often examine the program as a whole without attempting to determine the role of individual elements such as education.
- Programs need to be implemented with integrity, meaning the program model is based on a clear theoretical framework, the program elements and methods are grounded in research, and programming is provided by qualified, trained staff following standardized protocols. MacKenzie emphasizes that proper dosage is also important, and even effective programming may fail if it is not provided consistently or for a long enough period of time. (For more on the importance of program dosage, see the text box above.)

While the principles outlined above apply to correctional programming in general and are not specific to education, they may help guide the development of correctional education programs. In the same way, existing research on adult education in the community may inform education programs for adults who are incarcerated. In a review of the field, John Comings, Lisa Soricone, and Maricel Santos (2006) draw on professional wisdom and empirical evidence to identify critical principles for adult education. They discuss a number of principles in their paper, including several that are relevant to correctional education:

- Programs should have clearly defined recruitment and hiring processes for instructors and policies that identify what constitutes qualified program staff. Instructional staff should have access to professional development opportunities and support services.
- Programs should have comprehensive student recruitment and orientation components. Before participation, staff should assess the goals, skill level, and needs of each student and develop an individual learning plan based on these assessments.
- Programs should be provided in environments supportive of learning in which students feel physically safe and comfortable. Programs should use materials and activities that have been designed especially for adult learners and are "relevant and meaningful to students' life contexts." In addition to print materials, programs should use computers and individual tutoring.
- Programs should have appropriate staff-to-student ratios and avoid mixing different skill levels in the classroom.
- Programs should have well-defined roles within their communities, governing bodies composed of community stakeholders, and open lines of communication with important local agencies. Additionally, strong management systems should incorporate data collection and evaluation processes to ensure program effectiveness and accountability.

The principles outlined above are not specific to correctional education, though they may offer valuable insight into how best to educate incarcerated adults. Clearly, there is still a great deal to learn about what works in correctional education, as well as how successful programs operate and what program models are most effective for different types of students.

Limitations in Existing Research

The body of research on educational programs for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people is somewhat limited in both scope and rigor. Although several valuable studies exist, many others are plagued by methodological issues that make their findings unreliable. The most significant methodological concerns and research gaps in the field are listed below.[11]

[11] The material in this section comes from the authors' examination of the research literature as well as from Gaes (2008) and MacKenzie (2008).

Creating Matched Comparison Groups

- Very few studies use random-assignment evaluation designs, though this is not surprising given the difficulty of implementing such evaluations in real-world settings.
- Participation in most programs is voluntary and some studies fail to account for potential selection bias, in terms of factors such as intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes that might set participants apart from nonparticipants. Some of the stronger studies attempt to address selection bias by modeling the selection process and creating carefully matched comparison groups.
- Few studies control for the pre-treatment education and ability levels of participants and nonparticipants, in part because these data are rarely readily available.

Accurately Specifying the Treatment

- The existing research fails to answer questions about what types of programming are effective for different types of participants. Very few studies explore program characteristics such as instructional methods, dosage, and staff qualifications, which can vary significantly across programs.
- In evaluations of multimodal programming, it is difficult to parse out the role education may have played in influencing outcomes from the effect of other services and programs.
- Programs may not be implemented with fidelity to the theoretical program model: participation may be interrupted, dosage may be insufficient, or classroom activities may not follow specified curricula.

Defining and Measuring Relevant Outcomes

- The vast majority of studies conceptualize treatment as participation and/or completion of programming, without examining intermediate outcomes that could indicate how programs actually affect thinking and behavior. Relevant intermediate outcomes might include literacy gains, development of concrete skills, improved cognitive abilities, and reduced criminal thinking.
- As in other studies that use recidivism as an outcome measure, there are diverse opinions about how to best define recidivism (rearrest, reincarceration, etc.) and the period over which to track recidivism.

Examining a Range of Programs and Participants

- Like many studies in the criminal justice field, few evaluations of correctional education include significant samples of women.
- Most evaluations focus on in-prison programming; research on education for former prisoners in the community is virtually nonexistent. Many studies of adult education programs in the community do not distinguish participants with incarceration histories from other participants.

- Although mandatory participation requirements are common and often increase participation rates, few studies examine whether individuals whose participation in education is required have different experiences and outcomes than individuals who volunteer to participate.

Addressing these methodological issues requires more rigorous studies that incorporate a broader range of data. To facilitate better research, programs and correctional systems should make an effort to collect more extensive data on both participants and program activities. Researchers also need to expand their theoretical frameworks to examine the effect of different types of program activities and program characteristics and explore a range of intermediate and long-term outcomes.

Education Behind the Walls

Challenges and Opportunities

Correctional facilities present unique challenges for the provision of educational services. Educators are tasked with instructing adults with a wide range of cognitive abilities and previous educational experiences, including many who have consistently been unsuccessful in the broader public education system. Instructors must educate these individuals in the face of limited funding, space, and resources; interruptions to program continuity; and institutional security concerns that significantly constrain programming. Perhaps the biggest challenge is that correctional facilities are, first and foremost, institutions of control and security, not classrooms or schools. Despite these challenges, education can flourish within the prison walls with the support of correctional administrators and a willingness on the part of correctional educators to teach within and around the constraints. In fact, education can contribute to the correctional mission of secure facilities and safe communities by improving inmate behavior on the inside and promoting success after release. The form that successful correctional education programs take varies significantly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in terms of structure, staffing, teaching methodologies, program delivery, materials and technology, and other components. Yet the best programs often have several features in common: proper assessment and placement of students, well-trained teachers

equipped with the right tools, strategic use of appropriate technology, and effective incentive structures. This section discusses both the challenges and opportunities involved in providing education behind the prison or jail walls.

The Challenges of Providing Education in a Correctional Setting

The correctional environment presents many challenges for the provision of educational services. The most common include the following:

A diverse population with a wide range of cognitive abilities and previous educational experiences. The education levels of incarcerated people vary significantly, from almost total illiteracy to some level of high school education or even postsecondary experience. In addition, formal educational attainment is not always a reliable indicator of skills; an individual may have reached or even completed high school yet be reading at a 6th grade level. Incarcerated students with a full range of formal and actual skill levels can sometimes end up in the same classroom together, depending on the size of the facility, the types of programs offered, and the eligibility requirements for different programs. In addition to the range of educational levels among inmate students, a significant share has learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, and/or mental health issues that complicate their social and educational needs. Unfortunately, learning disabilities and mental health issues are often undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, or improperly treated. Other groups that present special educational needs are students with limited English language skills and juveniles, who make up approximately 1 percent of state and federal prison and local jail populations (Hartney 2006; for more on educating incarcerated juveniles, see the text box on page 26).

Limited funding, materials, space, and other resources. As with education programs in the community, many correctional education systems face serious funding and resource limitations. Consistent, dedicated funding streams for correctional education are often lacking, as funding may come from multiple sources and may be one item among many in a facility's

Putting Education First: Lessons from Singapore

In 1999, Singapore launched the Kaki Bukit Centre, a "prison school" where up to 280 inmates participating in correctional education are housed. Centralizing students and programs in one facility improves efficiency while also creating a supportive environment that is conducive to learning. As Aik Boon Ng of the Singapore Prison Service explained at the Roundtable, the Centre represents a paradigm shift, in that the institution is first a school, then a prison. Safety and security are still top concerns, although these are balanced with the needs of the school environment. The Centre is jointly run by civilian teachers, uniformed corrections officers, and social workers. According to Singapore's Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, the program has "developed a group of inmates, a group of students, who have confidence and talents and are determined to go far" (Singapore Prison Service n.d.).

general programming budget. Over the past several years, funding for correctional education generally has not increased as rapidly as the size of the incarcerated population. Education programs are often the first to go during budget cuts, either because they are viewed by correctional administrators as nonessential or because legally required services such as medical care and sanitary living conditions must be given priority. Limited funding restricts the availability of classroom materials; equipment for vocational programs; computers, Internet access, and other technology; and even the availability of sufficient numbers of well-trained instructors. In fact, a number of correctional education programs are operated and staffed by nonprofit organizations or volunteers. Space concerns are also an issue: because many correctional facilities were not designed with programming in mind, classroom space can be limited and cramped. Classrooms may have to be shared with other programs, and space for computers or specialized equipment for vocational training can be scarce.

Educating Incarcerated Juveniles

Although people under the age of 18 make up only 1 percent of the population of adult correctional facilities (Hartney 2006), they have distinct educational needs that require significant attention. In most states, correctional agencies are legally required to provide educational services to minors, including appropriate services for those with disabilities. Many incarcerated young people have a recent history of negative experiences with the public school system, and a significant share has learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral disturbances, or mental health issues. Obtaining prior school records for young inmate students can help illuminate their previous educational experiences and inform the provision of appropriate educational services. Correctional education for juveniles often looks different than programming for adult inmates, as the goal for a young person is typically to earn a high school diploma and/or return to school in the community, as opposed to obtaining a GED. For this reason, programs for youth are more likely to use a curriculum that corresponds with one used in local schools. Some correctional agencies partner with local school districts or develop their own internal school systems to educate the juveniles in their custody.

Incarcerated youth need reentry preparation and case management to ensure a smooth transition back to school after release. Such planning is especially important for juveniles who are cycling in and out of the school and criminal justice systems. Communication between corrections and school districts is critical for ensuring successful transitions from the justice system back into the school system.

For more on educating incarcerated juveniles, see the Roundtable paper "Understanding and Responding to the Education Needs of Special Populations in Adult Corrections" (Leone et al. 2008).

Interruptions to program continuity, including short stays, frequent transfers, and restrictions on inmate movement. Research has demonstrated that dosage is a significant factor influencing program effectiveness, and that continuous participation in programming for a specified period is often essential to success (Cho and Tyler 2008). Yet the needs of the correctional system frequently take precedence over the need for program continuity. Facility lockdowns or restrictions on the movement of certain inmates can interrupt participation. Based on systemwide needs, inmates may be transferred to another facility with little advance notice, and the new facility may or may not offer comparable educational programming. Inconsistent funding streams and teacher vacancies can also interrupt program continuity. Short stays are a significant issue as well, particularly for local jails. Jails typically lag behind state and federal prisons in offering educational services, in large part because of the difficulty of providing programs to a population that changes from day to day and is only incarcerated for a short time.

Institutional security concerns. Correctional administrators have a responsibility to ensure their facilities are safe and secure, which often means restricting inmates' access to various items and to other inmates. Things that may seem simple in community classrooms, such as offering Internet access or providing students with certain equipment or materials, may be nearly impossible in correctional facilities. Even ensuring that outside instructors and volunteers are able to enter and exit the facility quickly and easily can be challenging. Bringing inmate students of different security classifications together in the same classroom may be difficult, and those on segregated security classifications may require one-on-one instruction or some form of computerized programming.

Most of the constraints outlined above result from the fact that a correctional facility is not, first and foremost, a school or a classroom. The vast majority of correctional administrators prioritize a safe and secure facility above all else, with good reason. The challenge for correctional educators is to work within and around the resulting constraints, but also to demonstrate to administrators that educational programming can actually promote institutional security rather than threaten it. Programming occupies and engages students who might otherwise be idle, and education can improve decisionmaking skills and promote pro-social behavior. Many of the correctional administrators who participated in the Roundtable emphasized that, by improving in-prison behavior and promoting adjustment to prison, education programs can play a critical role in maintaining security and order within correctional facilities.

Institutional Models for Delivering Correctional Education

Every state correctional system has a different institutional structure for delivering educational services. Many correctional education programs are managed by the state department of corrections, although the degree of centralized supervision varies. In many cases, the department of corrections provides funding to facilities for education but leaves the design and management of the programs up to each facility. On the other hand, some systems have a central education director within the department who has significant administrative, personnel, and budgetary authority over educational programs.

Some states have gone further and established independent school systems or educational agencies that have a significant amount of authority and independence from the department of corrections. Texas, for example, created the Windham School District (WSD) to provide educational opportunities to the state's incarcerated population. WSD offers a wide range of academic and vocational programs in Texas correctional facilities, as well as postsecondary opportunities through the Division of Continuing Education. Currently over 80 schools exist within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). However, the WSD functions as a separate entity from the TDCJ, with its own school board, budget, and staff.

Other state correctional systems contract out the responsibility for inmate education to outside entities such as community colleges. All correctional facilities in North Carolina, for example, have educational services provided by the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS). The local community colleges provide programs from adult basic education through associate's degrees. All degree- and credit-bearing courses are located on site at the correctional facilities and credits can be transferred to community colleges and four-year institutions after release.

Sources: Contardo and Tolbert (2008); Stephen Steurer, Executive Director of the Correctional Education Association, e-mail communication with the authors, March 31, 2009; and Windham School District web site, http://www.windhamschooldistrict.org/, accessed March 31, 2009.

Building Blocks for Program Success

The constraints and challenges of providing educational programming in a correctional setting only complicate the already difficult task of educating adults who have often been unsuccessful in the public education system for many years. Researchers in the field have yet to determine how incarcerated adults best learn, resulting in wide variation in program models across jurisdictions. Programs vary significantly in terms of curricula, instructional methods, quality of instruction, use of technology and other materials, staffing, program delivery, dosage, participation incentives, participation and completion rates, management and organizational structures, and other components. Because little data exist on many of these elements, describing an ideal or even a typical correctional education program is difficult. However, the Roundtable explored some components of effective correctional education in detail, including proper student assessment and placement, well-trained teachers, appropriate use of

technology, and effective incentive structures, all of which are discussed below. While these elements are also components of successful adult education in the community, here we have attempted to explore the dynamics of each within the correctional environment.

Assessment and Program Placement

The educational programming an incarcerated student receives should be tailored to the educational needs and objectives of that student, as well as the correctional system. If the goal is vocational training and employability, programming will look very different than if the objective is GED attainment or a general liberal arts education aimed at expanding cognitive abilities. (Participation in different types of programming is not mutually exclusive, however: an incarcerated student can participate in vocational training while also attending academic courses.) Systems need to accurately screen and assess inmates, ideally at intake, and have guidelines for placing them in education and other programs that suit their needs. Whenever possible, programming should also be gender-responsive, culturally competent, and otherwise appropriate to students' past social and educational experiences.

Proper screening, assessment, and placement can also help ensure continuity of participation. The determination of what programming is appropriate for an incarcerated student should consider that person's anticipated incarceration length and the types of facilities in which he or she is expected to stay during the incarceration. In North Carolina, for example, a prison's educational offerings are determined by the minimum length of stay in the facility. All facilities offer some type of programming, but a matrix is used to ensure that programs are only provided at facilities where inmates will be able to finish them (Contardo and Tolbert 2008). Standardizing course curricula across facilities is another strategy for promoting program continuity and completion. If courses are standardized, incarcerated students may be able to pick up where they left off once they transfer to a new facility.

Assessment also helps identify and properly place individuals with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, mental health issues, or other special needs. These individuals often have difficulty succeeding in

The Educational Assessment Process

The educational assessment process should cover three primary areas:

Academic
- Educational background
- Literacy and basic skills
- Content-area knowledge (for more advanced students)
- English language abilities

Occupational
- Employment history
- Occupational interests and aptitudes
- Job-specific vocational skills and certifications
- Basic, non-specific job skills (customer service, teamwork, handling money, etc.)

Special Needs
- Learning disabilities
- Developmental disabilities and intellectual capability level
- Physical disabilities (vision, hearing, speech, etc.)
- Emotional and behavioral disorders and other mental health issues

Educational assessment may occur in conjunction with other screening activities at intake or classification, or when an inmate expresses interest in educational programming. A wide range of adult assessment tools is available, and correctional education systems should ensure that the tools they use are well-recognized in the broader education community.

Information about specific academic assessment tools designed for use with adults is available at http://www.nrsweb.org/nrswork/database/default.aspx.

a regular classroom and may need specialized programming provided by expert instructors.[12] Federal law and various legal decisions require that correctional facilities make "reasonable accommodations" to provide disabled individuals with access to the same types of educational services as other inmates.[13] It can be challenging to provide specialized and individualized services, but correctional agencies have some autonomy in determining how to best meet the needs of disabled students. Special needs individuals typically enter the justice system with lower educational attainment than non-disabled individuals (Harlow 2003), and their educational needs and objectives may differ from those of other students. For example, the most valuable goal for someone with a severe learning disability may not be a postsecondary degree or even a GED. Assessment and proper placement will help address these issues and ensure that all individuals are receiving adequate and appropriate educational services.

Assessment is essential not only for placing students into programming, but also for measuring their progress and supporting release planning. Ongoing student assessment can measure the effectiveness of a facility's programs and hold both students and instructors accountable. Assessment shortly before release can provide individuals with information about their current ability level and help them make appropriate educational plans for after their release. Pre-release assessment also provides valuable information about the educational level of the recently released population in a community, including those on probation and parole. Unfortunately, educational assessment at the time of release is rare, as is the transfer of institutional educational records to programs at other facilities or in the community.

> If a prison classroom offers inept . . . staff and/or curriculum, it inherits the hostility generated by the entire prison experience. However, if it shines with competency and concern, it shines brighter than its community counterpart could possibly shine. . . . Most prisoners are desperately in need of deserving heroes. Rarely have I seen a prison instructor fully exploit his/her capacity to permanently redirect a life, but the capacity is there nonetheless.
>
> — JUDY, A STUDENT INCARCERATED IN VIRGINIA

Well-Trained and Well-Supported Teachers

The success of any educational system ultimately rests on having well-trained, engaged teachers who are equipped with the tools needed to educate their students. Many correctional systems require their teaching staff to be formally trained and certified. The Correctional Education Association (CEA), an organization that accredits adult and juvenile correctional education systems across the country, has standards

[12] More information on educating incarcerated students with disabilities is available in the Roundtable paper "Understanding and Responding to the Education Needs of Special Populations in Adult Corrections" (Leone et al. 2008).

[13] Key legislation governing educational access for people with disabilities, including incarcerated individuals, includes the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (1973), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) (Leone et al. 2008).

that require instructors to be certified as public school teachers at a minimum.[14] Even certified teachers may need additional training, however, to prepare them to address the learning needs of incarcerated adults. Incarcerated students have a wide range of ability levels and educational backgrounds, and many have had poor experiences with education in the past. The CEA and other organizations offer courses that provide specific training on teaching correctional populations.[15] Correctional educators may also need preparation for working with students who have learning disabilities or other special needs, given the high prevalence of these issues among the incarcerated population. Systems can hire special education teachers who have received rigorous, specialized training, or they can train general educators in how to modify and adapt instruction for special populations. Even non-disabled students can benefit when their instructors have training in teaching to different learning styles and ability levels.

Finding talented, well-trained teachers interested in working in correctional facilities can be difficult. Prisons are often located far from urban areas or other places with large numbers of potential instructors. The share of correctional employees devoted to education has declined over the past several years. In 1990, 4.1 percent of state and federal prison employees were classified as educational staff; by 2005 that number had dropped to 2.6 percent (Klein et al. 2004; Stephan 2008).[16] Government or private initiatives might increase the pool of potential correctional educators by training teachers and providing incentives for them to work in corrections. Roundtable participant Mindy Feldbaum is currently developing an initiative to train and support a corps of correctional educators, similar to the Teach for America program (see text box).

In many systems, particularly those with limited resources, certified teachers are supplemented with volunteer instructors from the community and inmate instructors and tutors. Although these individuals typically have limited training as educators, they can offer significant support to trained teachers and enhance the classroom environment. They can be particularly valuable in areas such as literacy where one-on-one tutoring has been found to be important for learning. A recent survey of state correctional systems found that some systems have more inmate tutors than paid teachers, suggesting that

Developing a Pool of Correctional Educators

Roundtable participant Mindy Feldbaum of the Academy for Education Development (AED) is pursuing an initiative to develop a new pool of talented correctional educators. Drawing on the success of the Teach for America model, the Correctional Education Teaching Corps will seek to attract a diverse group of individuals who will commit to teaching in a correctional setting. Before being placed in a correctional facility, Corps members will participate in an intensive learning lab to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to become effective educators. The lab will provide Corps members with a complete understanding of the criminal justice system and will prepare them for the challenges of working in a correctional environment.

[14] Stephen Steurer, Executive Director of the Correctional Education Association, e-mail communication with the authors, January 15, 2009.
[15] For more information on professional development opportunities offered by CEA, visit their web site at www.ceanational.org.
[16] These figures do not reflect the use of outside contractors or partner agencies to provide instruction (such as instructors from local colleges), because these individuals are typically not counted as correctional staff. Also, the data do not distinguish between full-time and part-time staff.

peer-to-peer learning is an important method of instruction in correctional classrooms (Corrections Compendium 2008). The selective use of volunteers and inmate instructors can be a valuable tool for expanding program capacity and compounding the return on salaried instructors, but these individuals will need to receive some degree of training and may only be able to provide certain types of programming.

Whether they are trained teachers or volunteer instructors, correctional educators need adequate materials, equipment, instructional tools, and space for conducting their lessons. Facility design should take program needs into consideration, and correctional administrators must work to ensure that teachers have the tools and resources they need. Communication between educators and correctional administrators is critical to ensuring that both material and logistical needs are met.

Appropriate Technology

In recent years, promising new computer and communications technologies have slowly been incorporated into correctional education. Multimedia content and interactive learning opportunities can now be delivered via the Internet, closed/restricted computer networks, satellite, closed-circuit television, CDs or DVDs, videotapes, or videoconferencing. Coursework using these technologies ranges from highly structured, prepackaged instruction to self-guided, individualized, and interactive lessons. Technology holds great promise for addressing many of the challenges of providing education in a correctional environment, such as institutional security constraints and inadequate funding and resources.[17]

The incorporation of new technological applications can enhance correctional education by

- providing programs specifically geared toward incarcerated populations;
- offering customized instruction that addresses different learning styles and ability levels, as well as special needs;
- delivering simultaneous instruction to large numbers of students in multiple locations, saving money and staff resources;
- serving facilities that are too isolated or have too few students to make face-to-face programming cost-effective;
- providing standardized coursework that is consistent across students and facilities;
- serving incarcerated students who, because of their security classification or for other reasons, cannot be in contact with other inmates;
- linking students to courses being offered in the community; and
- improving training programs for correctional educators.

[17] More information on the use of technology in education for incarcerated populations can be found in the Roundtable paper "The Effective Use of Technology in Correctional Education" (Borden and Richardson 2008).

Technology is more than simply a mechanism for delivering education; using computers, the Internet, and other communications technologies can be a learning experience in and of itself. Since many incarcerated students have limited exposure to these technologies, any interaction with computers or the Internet can serve as a form of vocational training. Computers and the Internet are also an increasingly essential part of the educational process itself, and both teachers and students rely heavily on these tools for seeking information, locating articles and references, and composing documents. Having technology available in correctional facilities also opens up the opportunity for computer skills classes and other technological training courses.

Innovative Strategies for Using Technology in Education for Criminal Justice Populations

- The Transforming Lives Network (TLN) provides education for incarcerated individuals and training for instructors and correctional staff via satellite. This distance learning project is managed by the Correctional Education Association (CEA) and funded by subscriptions from participating institutions. Through a partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and the Milwaukee Area Technical College's College of the Air program, TLN now offers courses for college credit.
- New Mexico provides academic postsecondary education through partnerships with three state educational institutions. Distance-learning courses are provided using a closed-circuit Internet connection.
- Ohio's London Correctional Facility has a six-month interactive media and web design course that teaches students basic design and web development skills. Students have produced several web sites and other products for nonprofit clients.
- Ohio's Transitional Education Program (TEP) is designed to prepare individuals for success after release. The in-prison component offers distance-learning through videoconferencing with instructors located at a central site, along with self-paced learning using a specialized computer program. After release, individuals have access to a specially designed support web site and can connect to a TEP caseworker for support via Internet, e-mail, or telephone.
- The Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community project, or P2C, provides women in New Jersey with access to computer-based learning opportunities in prison and after release. Participants take courses in basic math and literacy, life skills, and computer skills, including the use of Microsoft Office applications. In prison, participants are given access to a simulated Internet program which allows them to explore and learn about the Internet in a safe environment. Women who successfully complete the first phases are given a home computer with Internet access to continue their training after release.

Sources: Borden and Richardson (2008); Contardo and Tolbert (2008); McKay et al. (2008); Ann Coppola, September 10, 2007, "Accessing the Future," http://www.corrections.com/news/article/16587 (accessed February 11, 2009); Ohio's Transitional Education Program web site, http://www.drc.state.oh.us/ocss/OCSS_transitional.htm, accessed February 11, 2009; and the Transforming Lives Network web site, http://www.tln.ceanational.org/, accessed February 11, 2009.

Despite many potential benefits, technology can have drawbacks if not used carefully. While exciting new technologies can be appealing, the benefits and appropriate use of a proposed technology should be carefully considered and, if deemed effective, the application should be deliberately and purposefully integrated into the classroom. Giving the latest technology to teachers and students without any support or guidance can be overwhelming and ineffective. These individuals need training in the technology's use and time to adapt to it and integrate it into the educational process. Occasionally, teachers fear that technology will replace them or hinder their preferred instructional methods. Many educators also question whether distance learning, computer-based coursework, or other technology-driven programs can provide the same quality of education as face- to-face instruction. Direct guidance from a teacher, contact with other students, and experience working in group environments are all intangible benefits of traditional classroom instruction. Hybrid models, wherein programs like distance learning are combined with face-to-face classroom instruction and support, may offer a promising compromise.

> Technology should serve us, not the other way around.
>
> — Cindy Borden and Penny Richardson, Northstar Correctional Education Services

New technologies also come with security risks, which is why some correctional facilities have strongly resisted allowing Internet access to incarcerated students and even staff. Many of these security concerns can be addressed with careful planning and regulations governing access and use. Software applications such as firewalls and content filters can restrict Internet access, and clear rules and sanctions can deter misuse of technology. Although the security concerns are well-founded, there is fairly widespread agreement that technology must be allowed into correctional facilities in some form, given the important role computers, the Internet, and other communications technologies play in life outside the walls.

Effective Incentives

Student motivation is a key issue in any educational system, particularly in settings such as correctional facilities where many students have been discouraged by their past educational experiences. Well-designed incentive structures can encourage individuals to participate in and complete education programs. In-prison benefits, such as expanded access to visitation or commissary, and rewards such as good time credits or other forms of sentence reduction can promote participation. In Indiana, certain types of offenders are eligible to receive sentence credits for completing educational programming, with increasing time credits rewarded for higher levels of educational achievement.[18] When developing incentive structures, program administrators should consider both "carrots" (rewards) and "sticks" (sanctions). For example, New Mexico encourages program completion by providing good time credits in a lump sum once

[18] Indiana State Code, http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title35/ar50/ch6.html#IC35-50-6-3, accessed March 30, 2009.

a program is completed but also by garnishing inmate wages to help pay the cost of a program if the student drops out (Contardo and Tolbert 2008).

Not all incentives need to provide tangible benefits: awards and acknowledgement within the classroom and in special ceremonies may seem trivial but can do a great deal to keep students motivated and make them feel proud of their achievements. Program quality and classroom environment also play a role in student engagement and motivation. Participation and good behavior can also be encouraged by requiring students to sign a participation agreement and/or classroom behavior contract laying out the responsibilities of the student, the instructors, and the correctional system. Even if such contracts are not legally binding, formalizing the educational agreement can encourage all sides to follow through on their commitments.

Because incentives and disincentives affect who is in the classroom and for what reasons, correctional systems should carefully consider the incentive structures they have in place. Some systems require participation in adult basic education, GED preparation, or other courses for individuals functioning below a certain level (Crayton and Neusteter 2008). The goal of such requirements is to ensure that all inmates reach a certain level of literacy and abilities. However, some educators have questioned the value of having students who are being forced to participate in the same classroom with more motivated students. Program administrators also need to consider disincentives that may discourage or prevent individuals from participating. Communication between educators and correctional staff helps ensure that individuals who attend classes do not miss out on perks like recreation time or commissary. Inmates may not have time for education courses because they need the money or other benefits from in-prison jobs. In response, some correctional systems pay people for participation in educational programming, in some cases paying the same wage an individual would have received at an in-prison job. For example, Rikers Island Jail in New York City is experimenting with a program that pays anyone under the age of 24 to participate in educational activities (Crayton and Neusteter 2008).

From Classroom to Community

Education and Reentry

Educational opportunities should not end at the prison walls, and programs in correctional facilities should be viewed as a first step on an individual's larger educational path. Correctional education should build a foundation that, supplemented with reentry planning and case management, can bring individuals real-world success in continuing education and in employment. Structures and support are needed to help individuals transition from correctional education to education in the community after release, and partnerships and collaborations among key agencies can help build these links. This section explores the transition from education during incarceration to education, employment, and other reentry successes in the community.[19]

Promoting Education and Employment Success after Release

Correctional education programs should be structured with reentry in mind, laying the groundwork for students to obtain employment and/or continue their education after release. Correctional education should provide relevant skills and abilities on par with similar programs available in the community, and

[19] More information on education after release is available in the Roundtable paper "Prison Postsecondary Education: Bridging Learning from Incarceration to the Community" by Jeanne Contardo and Michelle Tolbert (2008).

achievement should be formally recognized via widely accepted credentials. Individuals also need support and planning during the reentry process to help them translate their in-prison education into real world success.

> The challenges are ensuring that current and new program credits, certificates, and licenses are not only transferable between prisons and outside institutions, but also in demand by [the local] business community.
>
> — GENO, A STUDENT INCARCERATED IN VIRGINIA

Program designers need to ensure that course credits, certificates, and other credentials obtained during incarceration are recognized by the broader educational community as well as employers. In the realm of academic instruction, programs should provide courses that qualify students for further education (such as the GED) or that transfer to other educational institutions like community colleges and state universities. Often the more centralized and standardized a correctional education system is, the more likely credits are to transfer. Postsecondary education in New Mexico's prisons, for example, follows a standardized curriculum. The most widely available program leads to an associate's degree in general studies that articulates to all the state's public universities and forms the core curriculum for a bachelor's degree (Contardo and Tolbert 2008).

Vocational programs should also be reentry-relevant, providing skills, abilities, and certifications that will help individuals obtain good-paying, stable employment, ideally in a high-growth industry where jobs are in demand. Creating programming that is relevant to the local and regional job market and suitable for the incarcerated population may require analyzing labor market trends and structuring vocational training and other education programs accordingly. Correctional administrators and educators should also consider legal barriers that prevent people with criminal histories from being employed in certain industries (Samuels and Mukamal 2004). Continual review is important to ensure that training programs provide the most current knowledge and techniques in a field. Vocational training in some facilities is geared toward outdated career paths and uses equipment and techniques that are no longer relevant. To ensure that their educational efforts are effectively preparing students for employment, North Carolina has developed a business and industry advisory committee that advises the state on academic and vocational education for incarcerated students (Contardo and Tolbert 2008).

Even if a strong educational foundation is laid in prison, individuals may encounter significant barriers to continuing their education or obtaining employment after release. Returning prisoners face challenges on many fronts and obtaining education and training may not be their first priority as they struggle to meet their basic needs and reconnect with their families. Those who do pursue education or employment may have difficulty with issues as basic as finding transportation to class or a job and a stable, calm living environment in which to study and rest. Individuals need reentry planning and case management to help them navigate the reentry process and ensure that all the pieces are in place to support their employment and education endeavors. Those who are

Providing Wraparound Support for Continuing Education: The College and Community Fellowship

The College and Community Fellowship (CCF) is a New York-based organization that provides formerly incarcerated women with opportunities for educational advancement, professional development, personal growth, public leadership, and civic participation. CCF supports women who are continuing their education through mentoring, financial assistance, peer support networks, academic counseling, leadership training, and referrals to agencies that offer housing, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and other services. Students who maintain a minimum 2.5 grade point average have the opportunity to receive $600 each semester after they earn their first 12 college credits. Almost 70 percent of CCF participants receive four-year college degrees within four years of starting the program. Since the program began eight years ago, 99 participants have received college degrees ranging from associate's degrees to Ph.D.s.

More information on CCF is available online at http://www.collegeandcommunity.org/.

pursuing further education can benefit from assistance in accessing educational opportunities and obtaining funding, academic counseling and mentoring, training in study skills, and peer support. In the realm of employment, formerly incarcerated individuals often need "soft skills" training that covers such topics as arriving at work on time and communicating with superiors and colleagues in the workplace. They also need resume and interview preparation, basic computer skills, and assistance with job development and placement. Vocational and academic education must be supplemented with these types of training activities and support in order for students to reap the full benefits of their education.

One of the most difficult challenges to continuing one's education after release is funding, despite the fact that people just released from prison are often eligible for financial aid.[20] In a recent survey of incarcerated men, funding was identified as the biggest obstacle preventing individuals from pursuing education after release (Hanneken and Dannerbeck 2007). Many people return to the community without a job or with a low-paying job, lacking savings or assets, with poor credit histories, and with a significant amount of debt from child support and criminal justice expenses. Yet education can be a valuable investment and, given their low incomes, many former prisoners qualify for need-based financial aid for postsecondary education (see text box on the next page). Unfortunately, formerly incarcerated people are often unaware of public and private funding sources that may be available for continuing their education. Additionally, some colleges have started conducting background checks and making admissions decisions based on applicants' criminal histories (Center for Community Alternatives 2008). There are generally no legal protections against using criminal records in college admissions.

Partnerships to Support Reentry Success

Whether they are seeking education, employment, or both, individuals returning from prison need support and case planning to achieve their goals. Increased collaboration and communication among agencies that work with returning prisoners can enhance educational services and support for this population. For example, when correctional

[20]In states where postsecondary correctional education is financed in part through loans which students are required to pay off after release, lack of financial resources can also discourage individuals from participating in education programs during incarceration.

Federal Funding for Education after Release

Though eligibility for some forms of federal financial aid for postsecondary education, such as Pell Grants, is revoked during incarceration, for the vast majority of inmates eligibility is reinstated upon release. Those with drug-related convictions, however, may still be disqualified from receiving federal financial aid for postsecondary education even after their release. Drug offenders were once barred completely from receiving aid under the Higher Education Act, but the act was amended in 2006 to apply only to those individuals who were receiving Title IV Federal financial aid *at the time of their drug conviction*. For these individuals, federal loans, grants, and work assistance are suspended on the date of conviction for varying lengths of time, depending on the type of offense and whether it is a repeat offense. However, a person convicted of a drug-related offense may have his or her eligibility for federal funding reinstated before the end of the suspension period if he or she completes specified types of substance abuse treatment and successfully passes two unannounced drug tests. Eligibility for financial aid may also be reinstated if the conviction is reversed, set aside, or otherwise repealed. While the disqualification of individuals who were receiving federal financial aid at the time of their drug conviction only affects a small number of former prisoners, confusion surrounding the ban often discourages eligible individuals from applying.

Source: Dan Klock, U.S. Department of Education, e-mail communication with the authors, December 10, 2008.

educators have information about what happens to their students after release, they can gauge whether their methods are being successful and how they might better prepare their students for reentry. They can also work to link their students to opportunities in the community and design their programs to help facilitate the transition process.

Partnerships between corrections, community supervision, service providers, educational institutions, and employers can strengthen correctional and community education programs and create links between incarceration and the community. Collaborations are particularly valuable for providing multimodal programs that address individual's multiple interrelated reentry needs, from employment and education to physical and mental health, substance abuse treatment, stable housing, and family reconnection. Innovative programs such as education release (similar to work release) inside facilities and education-focused transitional housing after release can help create bridges between incarceration and education in the community. Partnerships like North Carolina's business and industry advisory committee not only bring the expertise of employers into the design of correctional education, they also build buy-in among employers and interest in hiring former prisoners educated in the system. Multi-agency collaborations like the ones described above also help ensure that all partners are working toward a common goal; for example, that stringent supervision requirements are not getting in the way of individuals attending class.

Local jails are both uniquely suited for and in need of community partnerships (Solomon et al. 2008). Because jails are located close to the communities where inmates live, they have promising opportunities to build connections with local educators, employers, ser-

vice providers, and other key partners. Jails have a strong need for these partnerships because their inmate population transitions rapidly and many individuals only stay for a short time, making the provision of meaningful educational opportunities within the jail difficult. Partnerships with community educational institutions might take the form of programs where jail inmates start their coursework during incarceration and transition into a comparable program after release, or "education release" programs where inmates are permitted to leave the jail during their incarceration to receive education in the community. For some jail inmates whose incarceration is likely to be very short, the most appropriate role for the jail may be to assess their educational needs and connect them with appropriate community agencies so they can continue their education upon release.

Just as jails benefit from their proximity to the local community, community colleges are ideally suited for collaborations with the criminal justice system to educate current and former prisoners (Contardo and Tolbert 2008; U.S. Department of Education 2009). They have an explicit goal of providing education to everyone in a community, including nontraditional students and populations that are underserved by other institutions of higher education. Their classes cost less than many other institutions, and their course offerings are often flexible and responsive to student and community needs. Community colleges are, by definition, "uniquely situated within local communities" and have connections to employers, service providers, and others who should be engaged in the reentry process (Contardo and Tolbert 2008). Partnerships between correctional systems and community colleges can also benefit the colleges, as the funds they receive for providing correctional education can help them develop and expand their program offerings. Community colleges across the country are already strongly engaged in correctional education: they provide 68 percent of all postsecondary education behind bars (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2005).

Collaboration between Community Colleges and Corrections in North Carolina

The North Carolina Community College System (CCS) and Department of Corrections (DOC) partner to provide education to prison inmates in the state, including adult basic education, GED preparation, and postsecondary coursework. CCS provides postsecondary education to an impressive one-third of the state's inmates annually, with a strong focus on vocational training. The program only offers coursework that can lead to a certificate or academic degree, and credits can be transferred to CCS colleges or state universities. The partnership was initiated by the state's General Assembly in 1987, and the Assembly continues to play a role in managing the collaboration. Cooperative agreements govern the relationship and dictate program structures, agency responsibilities, inmate eligibility requirements, and other elements of the collaboration. The state funds the programming through several mechanisms, including tuition waivers, inmate welfare funds, and grants for smaller community colleges (Contardo and Tolbert 2008).

Information on education services offered by the North Carolina DOC is available online at http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/education/index.htm.

Conclusion

People from all walks of life pursue education for much the same reason: because it provides opportunity—the opportunity for self-improvement, a better life, and the means to provide for oneself and one's family. That this opportunity should be available to all has been a longstanding American ideal, as demonstrated by the development of the country's public education system, the dedication of government and private funding for higher education, and even the provision of education programs in correctional facilities. Unfortunately, the country's commitment to public education has not always been fulfilled, particularly for low-income people, people of color, and those involved in the criminal justice system. The lack of formal education among the incarcerated population is rooted in a much larger failure of the public education system in communities across the country, a failure that limits

> In a country where second chances and opportunity are professed values, democratic access to high-quality higher education must include access for people in prison and people who have been convicted of crimes. We cannot bar the most vulnerable people from the very thing that has the greatest potential to change their lives.
>
> — Vivian Nixon, Executive Director, College and Community Fellowship

Education for current and former prisoners is a cost-effective solution to reducing reoffending and improving public safety. The effect of education on recidivism has been well-demonstrated, and even small reductions in reoffending can have a significant impact when spread across large numbers of participants.

— Gerry Gaes, Visiting Researcher, College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Florida State University

the economic, political, and social opportunities available to people in these communities. For many individuals, even at the start of the 21st century, the tremendous transformative power of education remains out of reach.

The importance of access to high-quality education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people has once again garnered attention as part of a larger conversation on strategies for addressing the social and financial challenges caused by mass incarceration and prisoner reentry. The conversations at the Reentry Roundtable on Education made it clear that education can play a crucial role in rehabilitation and reintegration for people who are or have been incarcerated. Research demonstrates that education can change thinking, encourage pro-social behavior, increase employment, and reduce recidivism. Education's power to transform lives in both tangible and intangible ways makes it one of the most valuable and effective tools we may have for helping people rebuild their lives after incarceration, as well as for combating crime and reducing criminal justice costs.

While providing education within correctional facilities is challenging, education programs can flourish within prisons and jails when dedicated educators are equipped with the necessary resources and are supported by correctional administrators and staff. There is still a great deal to learn about what program models work and what instructional methods, staff training and qualifications, technology applications, participation incentives and other program components are effective for different types of students. There is also work to be done in developing models for providing education during and after reentry and ensuring that education does not stop at the prison walls. Individuals need planning and support to guarantee that the education they receive during incarceration translates into reentry success, employment, and especially opportunities for further education after release. Despite these challenges, the Roundtable demonstrated that there are individuals, from correctional administrators to reentry advocates to researchers, who believe in correctional education and are working to expand and improve it.

The Roundtable was meant to serve as a starting point for conversation and collaboration, and the discussion explored ideas for moving forward on several fronts. Participants highlighted the need to convince correctional administrators, policymakers, and the public that education is a sound investment that can reduce costs, enhance security and improve behavior within facilities, and produce positive outcomes after release. They suggested that the field has more to learn about how best

to educate adults involved in the criminal justice system and how to support individuals in shaping their own educational pathways. Roundtable participants focused on the importance of equipping educators with the tools they need and working with them to develop innovative strategies for providing education within prisons and in the community. Perhaps most importantly, participants emphasized the value of building partnerships across the board: between the worlds of education and corrections; between programs within facilities and those on the outside; and between policymakers, researchers, advocates, and practitioners. While more work remains to be done, the authors hope that the Roundtable and this monograph will inform and influence future efforts in the field of correctional education.

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