

**From Darkness to Light:
A Report on Corrections Education in New Jersey**

Prepared by the State Employment and Training Commission

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“Education is the movement from darkness to light.”

Allan Bloom

Prologue

Simply stated, this report concludes that recidivism will be measurably reduced by fundamentally transforming the educational culture in prisons. Education, along with other rehabilitation strategies, should not be viewed, as they often are, as the polar opposite of custody and security. Indeed, we need to ensure that our juvenile and adult correctional institutions actually function to “correct,” to rehabilitate – not just punish.

At their core, quality education programs promote the development of strong academic, cognitive, and vocational skills, which, in turn, help expand employment opportunities that are essential in preparing individuals to meet the challenges of everyday living. The best way to prevent someone from returning to prison is to provide them with the skills they need to find and hold a good job. Simply put, developing skills that lead to good jobs that pay good wages is a potent antidote to criminal behavior.

This argument is not new. Many experts have stressed the importance of education and rehabilitation as part of a comprehensive correctional approach. For instance, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger declared:

“When society places a person behind walls and bars, it has an obligation – a moral obligation – to do whatever can reasonably be done to change that person before he or she goes back into the stream of society.”

Indeed, the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) issued a report in 1997 titled *Standing Corrected: Education and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*

that advocated for “expanded and improved educational opportunities as a means of reducing the likelihood of recidivism and helping to deter ex-offenders from criminal involvement.”¹ Though more than ten years have passed since that report was issued, this current analysis argues that education or other rehabilitation efforts are no less marginal in the current correction system than they were then. Moreover, the recommendations in that previous report are still relevant today.

This report underscores the importance of New Jersey’s crafting a balanced correctional policy framework where enhanced education and rehabilitation efforts work seamlessly with those of custody and security. This is an obvious necessity, since the vast majority of those incarcerated - about 95% - will return to society at some point. Though in recent years New Jersey has experienced a decrease in its prison population, it, like the nation as a whole, has a criminal justice system that continually recycles far too many individuals. For many, the overriding purpose of incarceration is to punish in order to make society safer. In this era, society has little sympathy for prisoners – a phenomenon that will doubtlessly be exacerbated by the current increase in unemployment. Arguments in favor of enhanced prison education are rejected for “being soft on crime.” Ultimately, this is a self-defeating perspective because offenders return to their communities ill-prepared for anything but continued criminal behavior, and thus, the cycle persists. Worse, those who reengage in criminal behavior upon release also become negative role models, recruiters for “the incarceration pipeline.” This is the cycle of failure, a modern version of a “Gordian Knot,” which we seem unable to cut through.

Aside from the human costs of our failure to reduce recidivism rates, there is also a staggering economic cost. The escalating price tag of confining individuals - for New Jersey about \$28,000 per person in 2003,² but \$35,249 in 2007³ - too often translates

¹ Corrections Education Task Force. (1997) *Standing Corrected: Education and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*. New Jersey: New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission, 1997. <http://www.njsetc.net>.

² Travis, J, Keegan, S. and Cadora, E. (2003). *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey*. Washington DC: Urban Institute. p. 4.

³ New Jersey Department of Corrections, Office of Educational Services, (email, August 12, 2008).

into insufficient funding for the “secondary” concern for programs aimed at rehabilitation. For example, of the \$1,010,246,000 budget for the New Jersey Department of Corrections for FY 2007, its Office of Educational Services received only \$22,850,000 or 2.3%.⁴

While recognizing that custody and security must be paramount considerations in the operation of correctional institutions, these concerns should not crowd out the need to provide quality education programs. Noting that annual appropriations for custody and supervision have grown more than 500% in the last 20 years,⁵ the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice, indicates that “[w]hile it is critical that prison facilities be secure and that prisons serve the public’s interest in punishment and deterrence, it is as important to public safety that time spent in prison include meaningful preparation for productive and law abiding life outside of prison.”⁶ Punishment without rehabilitation is a Sisyphean effort – in the end, the rock will come tumbling down the hill.

Too, providing sufficient resources to achieve this purpose must be a priority. While in the short-run this approach will put greater strain on a burgeoning State budget, in the long-run a reduction in the rate of recidivism and the concomitant increase in behavior that leads to economic and social development, will yield significant cost savings.

The empirical evidence for this is overwhelming. For instance, Steuer and Tracy make the cost benefit argument for rehabilitation programs in *The Three State Recidivism Study*.⁷ In looking at 2000 data from Maryland and, taking into account reductions in recidivism related to prison education, they concluded that the financial return on an

⁴ New Jersey Department of Corrections, Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Planning, (email, August 19, 2008).

⁵ New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. *Coming Home for Good: Meeting the Challenge of Prisoner Reentry in New Jersey*. New Jersey: Author. p. 2. <http://www.njisj.org/reports/cominghome-report.html>.

⁶ Ibid p. 4.

⁷ Steuer, S. Smith, L. Tracy, A. (2001) *Three State Recidivism Study*. Lanham, Maryland: Correctional Education Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. CE 083 528)

annual State corrections education budget of \$11,700,000 yielded at least \$23,280,000 back to the State. In another study, Bazos and Hausman of the UCLA School for Public Policy concluded that corrections education is two to three times more cost-effective in preventing crime than expansion of correctional facilities to incarcerate more people.⁸

The Alliance for Excellent Education presents a powerful argument that addresses reducing the supply to the pipeline; that is, improving education outcomes within the school system, so that young people are more likely to complete high school and are better prepared both to pursue postsecondary education and move into the workforce.

The Alliance

...conservatively estimates that if the male graduation rate were increased by just five percent, *annual crime-related savings* to the nation would be approximately \$5 billion dollars....Beyond the savings related directly to crime reduction, almost \$2.8 billion in *additional annual earnings* would enter the economy if more students graduated from high school.⁹

Indeed, these savings become even more striking if the five percent of those same males go on to college. Under those conditions the savings would increase dramatically. Dr. Bill Cosby and Dr. Alvin Poussaint in a recent book in the popular press reinforce this point by comparing the investment made in sending an individual to a public college, versus the higher cost of incarcerating that same individual. These authors go on to say: "Educated kids usually pay the state back. Ex-inmates rarely do."¹⁰ It is our contention, however, that quality corrections education opportunities provide a second chance and increase the likelihood that an individual will become a productive and contributing member of society – and this is a pay back.

⁸ Bazos, A. and Hausman, J. *Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program*. <http://sppsr.ucla.edu/ps/research/correctionsal.pdf>.

⁹ Alliance for Excellent Education. (August, 2006) *Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings*. Issue Brief. (Available in PDF at http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/EconImpact).

¹⁰ Cosby, B. and Poussaint, A. (2007) *Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. p. 109.

This understanding of the inexorable link between education and reduced criminality is especially important for New Jersey, where urban high school dropout rates range between forty and sixty percent. It is a weakness in the way we develop public policy that these connections do not lie at the center of our thinking about how to reform our educational system. We are, however, not naïve – there is no perfect correlation between education and crime reduction or rehabilitation. Clearly both individual and societal variables influence one’s success or failure as well.

Finally, let us note that we do not directly address the issue of race and its attendant economic inequalities. Although the link between education and employment is our central thesis, we are fully aware that all employment and economic inequities are not explained by education and skills gaps alone. For example, when you control for education attainment, African-Americans and Hispanics still earn less than Whites.¹¹ One would expect this same discrepancy holds true for the ex-offender populations. We must continue to address race, gender, and class inequities both in the workplace and society as a whole if we truly want to ensure that all New Jersey’s citizens have the opportunity to become productive members of society and reach their full potential.

In the next section of this report, we take a closer look at the training and education programs currently provided by the correction system with a particular emphasis on their relationship to national skills credentials and employment opportunities. Following that description and analysis, we discuss the literacy and workforce skills gap of most prisoners. Lastly, we provide nine overarching recommendations designed to fundamentally change the way New Jersey educates its prisoners and prepares them for life on the outside.

Foremost among these, is the first, creation, by statute, of a blue-ribbon commission to define goals, set performance standards and annually evaluate outcomes of education programs. This recommendation is a *sine qua non* for all the others. That is, the

¹¹ Rodgers, W. (August 2007). *The Labor Market Status of New Jersey’s Minorities*. Unpublished Report of the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, prepared for the State Employment and Training Commission.

establishment of this commission will provide the leadership necessary to make education a priority and to focus institutional efforts on helping offenders develop a repertoire of skills that can contribute to law-abiding, productive and successful behavior.

Current Correction Education Offerings in New Jersey

What follows is an overview and analysis of the current education programs offered by the correction system in New Jersey. The original charge to the SETC in preparing this report was to assess the current set of educational offerings to understand their relationship to the labor market. Put another way, we were to evaluate the extent to which prisoners are being prepared for the world-of-work.

New Jersey correction enterprise can be viewed as three distinct systems:

1. The State adult system operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC). DOC is responsible for 14 State institutions, including one female and three youth facilities.
2. The State juvenile system managed by the Juvenile Justice Commission.
3. The county-based system of jails and detention centers.

In New Jersey, education for adult offenders is not mandatory. Upon entry into the State correction system, offenders are asked to indicate their highest level of education and are given an educational skills assessment to determine their academic skill levels. Participation in education programs is strictly voluntary, even for those who do not have a high school diploma or GED or whose basic skill levels are low.

The Department of Corrections operates classroom-based adult basic education, GED, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs throughout the system. A diagnostic-prescriptive model is used to develop a student's Pupil Performance Plan (PPP). Typically, offenders are assigned to morning or afternoon sessions on a first-come, first-served basis with priority given to youth offenders who do earn credits

toward the completion of a high school diploma. Upon successful completion of all credits, a high school diploma is awarded through the offender's school district, the local education agency.

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is responsible for the education of juveniles in its custody. Education is a priority for the Commission and is offered at all of its institutions. All students who do not have a GED or high school diploma are required to attend school. As in the Department of Corrections, education programs are administered through an internal office within the JJC, rather than through a separate department or correctional school district.

For juveniles seeking to earn a local high school diploma, JJC provides instruction and makes recommendations to the local education agency to award credit and when appropriate to issue that diploma. If for older youth the GED is a viable option, JJC provides instruction to prepare them to take the test. For offenders between the ages of 16 and 18, who have earned little or no high school credit and exhibit high levels of academic competencies on standardized tests, the GED is an option. JJC uses the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test to measure juveniles' academic skills attainment. Inexplicably, this test is not aligned with the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and, not necessarily recognized by any given school district that offenders may be returning to upon release. The JJC utilizes both group and individualized instruction. However, the primary focus of education programming is based upon the individual needs of each juvenile learner. For juveniles who have completed high school, full-day work assignments and college classes may be available. JJC continues to explore offering additional web-based courses with Burlington County College and plans to work with other county colleges to provide similar programming. Upon release, juveniles often return back to the same school district they were enrolled in prior to their incarceration. Very few go to training programs upon release. While we are not doing a full assessment of JJC, we think that the relationship of JJC to local school education agencies needs to be closely examined. See our recommendation on this topic later in this document.

DOC and JJC employ Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers who are fully certified by the New Jersey Department of Education. It is of some concern that DOC and JJC each only contract with two county vocational technical schools to provide specialized training. DOC indicates that due to internal structuring and apprenticeship requirements, only a limited number of these training opportunities are available. According to the US Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship,¹² New Jersey correctional institutions offer the following registered apprenticeship programs:

1. Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women – horticulture, office manager and upholstery.
2. Northern State Correctional Facility – culinary arts program.
3. Riverfront State Prison and New Jersey State Prison – graphic arts.
4. Garden State Youth Correctional Facility – cabinetmaking and upholstery.
5. Bayside State Prison – boiler mechanic, which leads to Blue Seal/Black Seal licensing.

In contrast, apprenticeship offerings at two federal prisons in New Jersey are as follows:

1. Fairton – baker; carpenter, maintenance; cook; dental assistant; experimental assembler; injection mold machine operator; landscape gardener; building maintenance repairer; mold setter; plumber; quality control technician; landscape technician; landscape management technician; HVAC technician; electrician, maintenance; computer peripheral equipment operator; animal trainer; housekeeper; fish hatchery.
2. Ft. Dix – housekeeper; quality control technician; landscape technician; electrician, maintenance; alteration tailor; cook; plumber; roofer; HVAC technician; teacher's aide; bricklayer.¹³

¹² United States Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (personal communication, August 20, 2008) and telephone communication, January 8, 2009.

¹³ Ibid.

This report strongly suggests that the New Jersey Department of Corrections seek to emulate the apprenticeship system used by the federal Department of Corrections.

The chart below titled *Current DOC CTE Programs and Certificates* indicates that NJ DOC offers 26 career and technical education (CTE) program areas, but at no one institution are all programs available. It should be noted that all facilities do not house the same type of offender nor does each facility command the same physical plant to offer expanded programs. Employability Skills is a general work readiness skills program, not occupational skill specific and the Vocational Skills Assessment is a career interest inventory. Of the remaining 24 programs, 12 lead to industry-based certificates upon successful completion in areas such as automotive technician, constructions trades, and graphic arts, as noted on the chart that follows.¹⁴ Clearly, those training programs that provide industry-based certificates and prepare inmates for jobs that have a history of being open to ex-offenders are the ideal training options. However, training that leads to industry-based certification, but does not prepare individuals for “ex-offender friendly” jobs may represent latent opportunities. DOC and LWD may want to meet with industry leaders in these areas to identify the barriers to hiring ex-offenders and develop strategies to reduce them.

Programs that do not lead to industry-based certificates provide no assurance that the training is aligned with industry skill standards, nor do they provide a recognized credential that signifies attainment of these skills. Ex-offenders may still be able to find jobs within an industry without the appropriate credentials, but when they do, they are consigned to the lowest rung of the job category and advancement along a career path is doubtful.

The chart also indicates that some of DOC’s programs have a direct correlation to the labor market, while some do not. Clearly, programs that do not have the desired

¹⁴ Data source: New Jersey Department of Corrections, Office of Educational Services, (email, August 12, 2008b and information provided at a meeting on September 30, 2008).

Current DOC CTE Programs and Certificates

Career and Technical Education Program	Number of Institutions	Leads to Industry-based Certificate		Ex-Offender Demand Jobs	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Auto Mechanics	2	√		√	
Cabinet Making	2		√	√	
Carpentry	7	√		√	
C-Tech Cabling Program	1	√			√
Clerical Skills	2		√		√
Computer Programming	5		√		√
Computer Applications	11	√			√
Computer Repair	2		√		√
Cosmetology	5	√			√
Culinary Arts	7	√		√	
Food Sanitation	5	√			√
Forklift Operator	4		√		√
Graphic Arts	7	√			√
Heating, Ventilation & AC	2	√		√	
Heavy Equipment	2		√		√
Horticulture	8	√		√	
Masonry	3	√			√
Painting And Decorating	1		√	√	
Media Technology	1		√		√
Paralegal Training	13	√			√
Plumbing	3	√		√	
Small Engine Repair	4		√		√
Upholstery & Interior Design	3		√		√
Welding	4	√			√
Other					
Employability Skills	10				
Vocational Assm't	14				

Industry-based Certificates
National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)
Auto Mechanics
National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)
Cabinet Making
Electrical/Electronics
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning
Masonry
Plumbing
Welding
Note: OSHA 10 Hour Construction Safety Training also provided.
EPA Section 608 and 609 Controlled Refrigerant Certificate
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning
Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation (PrintED)
Graphic Arts
National Restaurant Association (ServSafe)
Culinary
Food Sanitation
Pesticide Applicator, Commercial
Horticulture
C-Tech Cabling Certification
C-Tech Cabling Program

relationship to the labor market should be phased out. More importantly, corrections education must be made a more central priority.

It is our impression that despite the efforts of many in DOC, the legacy of indifference to education has led to the preservation of too many courses that are no longer relevant to the current labor market. It is the purpose of this report to offer ideas on how to improve both the content of the educational offerings by adding to their breadth and labor market relevance and to dramatically expand the number of prisoners served.

JJC offers career and technical education at all of its facilities. Some programs lead to industry-based credentials, such as Microsoft Office User Specialist, the National Center for Construction Education and Research Credential for the building and construction trades, and the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation programs certified by Automotive Service Excellence. CTE programs are primarily run by JCC though some programs are offered through partnerships with county vocational technical schools. However, JJC does not have formal agreements with vocational technical schools to recognize and grant advance standing to students who have completed training while incarcerated.

Counties are responsible for education programs in their jails and detention centers for a population whose stay is typically much shorter than that of State-committed offenders. For example, Passaic County's Youth Reception and Rehabilitation Center, supported by programs provided by the Passaic County Technical Institute, offers instruction focused on the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards for a minimum of four hours per day. The Center also has video conferencing to deliver and support instruction.

What follows is a brief discussion of the importance of literacy and work readiness skills to the prison population. This will be followed by recommendations designed to fundamentally change education in the State's correctional institutions.

The Literacy Connection

Study after study has shown a clear correlation between low literacy and the likelihood of both entering prison and recidivating. A higher percentage of offenders have lower literacy levels than non-offenders. Educational Testing Services (ETS) reports that about 41% of offenders, based on national data from 1997, had not attained a high school education. Too, the actual literacy levels of prisoners were substantially lower than the U.S. population as a whole; and offenders whose literacy levels remained low were more likely to be rearrested than those with higher skills.¹⁵

The National Adult Literacy Survey¹⁶ conducted in 1992, and the comparable National Assessment Adult Literacy¹⁷ completed in 2003, measured English literacy levels of the U.S. population. Specifically, three types of literacy were measured:

1. **Prose literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to use and understand continuous texts, such as news stories and instructional materials.
2. **Document literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to search, comprehend, and use information from noncontinuous texts such as job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, and drug and food labels.
3. **Quantitative literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to identify and perform computations using numbers that are embedded in printed materials. Tasks include balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, and determining the amount of interest on a loan.¹⁸

¹⁵ Coley, R. and Barton, P. (2006). *Locked Up and Locked Out: An Educational Perspective on the U.S. Prison Population*. Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service.

¹⁶ Kirsch, I. Jungeblut, A. Jenkins, L. and Kolstad, A. (1993). *Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey*.

¹⁷ Kutner, M. Grenenberg, E. Jin, Y. Boyle, B. Hsu, Y. and Dunleavy, E (2007). *Literacy in Everyday Life: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy*.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. iii-iv

Subsets of both surveys that assessed prisoners' literacy found an improvement in skill levels from 1992 to 2003; and when looking at inmates' educational background, a greater percentage of the 2003 cohort completed high school or earned their GED, 41%, compared to 31% for 1992.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the 2003 sample shows an incarcerated population with literacy skill deficiencies which strongly correlate with underemployment or unemployment. For example, 56% of the sample scored at the *basic or below* literacy level (16% *below basic* and 40% *basic* levels) on the prose literacy scale. Thus with their literacy skill levels, these individuals can be expected to perform no better than simple and everyday literacy tasks associated with searching, comprehending, and using information from continuous text. Conversely, 41% scored at the *intermediate* level, while only 3% at the *proficiency* level.²⁰

Comparing labor market outcomes with literacy levels for the general population in the 2003 sample provides a barometer for assessing prospective outcomes for offenders upon release. Of those in the general population who scored in the *below basic* prose category, only 35% were employed full time, while 44% of those in the *basic* category, 54% in the *intermediate*, and 64% in the *proficient* category were employed full time. Furthermore, of those employed full time, 59% who scored at the *below basic* level in prose, 43% at the *basic* level, 27% at the *intermediate* level, and 14% at the *proficiency* level had weekly gross earnings of less than \$500.²¹

Workforce Skills and Employment

If prisoners lack basic literacy skills, they also lack workforce skills. In *Linking Education and the Workplace: An Imperative for New Jersey's Future*, the SETC notes that beyond the traditional basic skills, workers need another set of essential

¹⁹ Greenberg, E. Dunleavy, E. Kutner, M. (2007) *Literacy Behind Bars Results From the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy Prison Survey* p. 12.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 13.

²¹ Kutner, M. Greenberg, E. Jin, Y. Boyle, B. Hsu, Y. and Dunleavy, E., op. cit.

skills: “thinking and problem-solving, development of personal qualities and understanding of interpersonal interactions, and the ability to understand organizational needs.”²² As an outgrowth of the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, known as the SCANS report – a study for the United States Department of Labor that describes the knowledge and foundation skills students need to compete in the workplace – Equipped for the Future (EFF) was created, which defines 16 essential skills that adults need in the 21st century.

Using the EFF framework, the National Work Readiness Council (NWRC) surveyed employers to determine the essential skills necessary for entry-level workers. These ten skills listed below are delineated in the NWRC Skills Profile, which can be found on page 40 of this document:

Communication Skills

1. Speak so others can understand
2. Listen actively
3. Read with understanding
4. Observe critically

Decision-Making Skills

7. Use Math to solve problems and communicate
8. Solve problems and make decisions

Interpersonal Skills

5. Cooperate with others
6. Resolve conflict and negotiate

Lifelong Learning Skills

9. Take responsibility for learning
10. Use information and communications technology

The National Work Readiness Credential (WRC) assessment measures nine of these skills to determine individuals’ preparedness for entry-level work. Though the tenth skill area, *Use information and communications technology*, was not rated as high as the others by some employers in the sample nor included in the assessment, this does not diminish the importance of this skill for the workforce.

²² The Taskforce on Education and Workforce Quality. (1996), *Linking Education and the Workplace: An Imperative for New Jersey’s Future*. New Jersey: SETC. p. 13. <http://www.njsetc.net>.

How ex-offenders measure up on these expanded skills has not been assessed, but deficiencies in these areas will diminish their employment prospects. It is widely understood that two critical barriers to employing ex-offenders are their lack of literacy and work readiness skills. Both of these skill sets need to be taught in prisons if former inmates are to have any hope of finding employment, much less achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Yet, only 11% of offenders incarcerated in DOC facilities during FY 2008 participated in academic programs and 6% in vocational programs.²³ In sharp contrast to the participation level is the fact that the average literacy skill level of inmates as noted above is below what is needed in the labor market. The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice indicates in *A Portrait of Prison Reentry in New Jersey*, upon admission, in 2003 the average inmate was at a 6.0 grade level in reading and a 5.4, in math,²⁴ with slight improvement in the reading levels in 2007 to 6.5.²⁵ According to DOC, only a 5th grade reading level is required to enter a CTE program. It is worth noting, however, that for pre-secondary level students²⁶ with below a 7.5 grade level the emphasis should be on basic skills, though they can be taught within a vocational context. Clearly, one would question enrolling a student in a program in which their academic skill level was too low to benefit from the program and earn an industry-based certificate.

It remains the case that if these offenders do not improve their basic skill levels while incarcerated, they have no hope of competing for the majority of jobs that pay a self-sufficiency wage. Those jobs require at least a high school diploma and commensurate skills, but with increasing frequency require postsecondary education

²³ Division of Labor Market and Demographic Research, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, op. cit. p. 4.

²⁴ Travis, J, Keegan, S. and Cadora, E., op. cit. p. 28.

²⁵ New Jersey Department of Corrections, Office of Educational Services. Op. cit. August 12, 2008.

²⁶ New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey Five-Year Career and Technical Education State Plan, for FY 2008 – FY 2013, p. 77. <http://www.nj.gov/education/voc/>.

or training. Indeed, it is arguable that in the absence of some form of postsecondary education, attaining self-sufficiency is a near impossibility.

Two-thirds of an employer sample surveyed by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), Center for Occupational Employment Information (COEI) indicated that positive work history would increase their likelihood of hiring an ex-offender, while about half would be inclined to do so if the individual had participated in worker training and earned a certificate.²⁷

The vast majority of these employers, however, had a high-skilled workforce with most of their jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree.²⁸

On the other hand, the following chart lists jobs with lower skill requirements that LWD has identified as providing good employment opportunities for ex-offenders.²⁹

Given the education level of most offenders, it is prudent to first ensure that offenders have attained the skill requirements for these types of jobs, that is, those with lower skill requirements that pay a good entry-level wage. However, once this primary goal is met, opportunities for higher skill education and training should be available within the institutions, as well as easily accessible as post-release options.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 24.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 17.

²⁹ Chart prepared by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Jobs Upon Prison Release

<i>The Department of Corrections provides</i>			LWD Center for Occupational	
<i>preparational training for all careers shown</i>			Employment Information	
Career Opportunities	Future Demand	Starting Wage	Maximum Wage	Education and Training
-Demand Occupations-	2004-2014	NJ 2005 avg.	NJ 2005 avg.	Job Zones 1 & 2
*Brokerage Clerks	Good	\$14.32 hr.	\$20.96 hr.	H.S diploma or G.E.D.
*Carpenter Assemblers & Repairers (A)	Good	\$17.15 hr	\$31.46 hr.	OJT, Apprenticeship
*Cooks, Fast Food	Good	\$7.15 hr.	\$9.59 hr.	No minimum education
*Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria (A)	Good	\$10.18 hr.	\$14.75 hr.	No minimum education
*Cooks, Short Order (A)	Good	\$7.38 hr.	\$10.77 hr.	No minimum education
*Customer Service Representatives (A)	Good	\$11.95 hr.	\$18.75 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
*Floral Designers (A)	Good	\$9.58 hr.	\$15.45 hr.	No minimum education
*Food Preparation Workers	Good	\$7.15 hr.	\$10.81 hr	No minimum education
*Landscaping & Groundskeeping Workers	Good	\$9.42 hr.	\$14.93 hr.	No minimum education
*Meat Poultry, and Fish Cutters & Trimmers (A)	Good	\$8.29 hr.	\$16.30 hr.	No minimum education
*Nursery Workers	Good	\$7.36 hr.	\$8.86 hr.	No minimum education
*Payroll & Timekeeping Clerks	Good	\$14.52 hr.	\$21.73 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
*Pesticide Handlers, Sprayers and Applicators, Vegetation	Good	\$12.66 hr.	\$17.00 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
*Receptionist & Information Clerks	Good	\$9.58 hr.	\$14.05 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
*Tile and Marble Setters (A)	Good	\$16.73 hr.	\$36.84 hr.	OJT, Apprenticeship
*Tractor-Trailer Drivers (A)	Good	\$15.75 hr.	\$22.21 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
*Truck Drivers-Light or Delivery Services	Good	\$10.76 hr.	\$18.38 hr.	H.S. diploma or G.E.D.
Job Zone 1: May require a high school diploma or GED certificate		Wage Data: Cover full-time, and seasonal employees		
Job Zone 2: Usually requires a high school diploma and may require some technical training.		but excludes temporary and contractual workers		
		(A): <i>Apprenticeable Occupations</i>		
		OJT: On-The-Job Training		

Even with appropriate skills and credentials, there are certain jobs that have statutory restrictions that bar or impede persons with criminal convictions from holding. Below is a listing of some job categories identified by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development in which certain criminal conviction serves as an absolute bar, under State or federal law. These include:³⁰

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Aircraft/airport employees | 10. Child care center employees |
| 2. School bus drivers | 11. Community residences for individuals with developmental disabilities |
| 3. School crossing guards | 12. Armored car crew members |
| 4. Bank employees | 13. Racetrack employees |
| 5. Bartenders | 14. Employees of a benefits plan |
| 6. Waiters in establishments where liquor is served | 15. Firearms purchasers |
| 7. New Jersey Turnpike Authority employees | 16. Private detectives |
| 8. Liquor retail | 17. Limousine drivers |
| 9. Wholesale, manufacturing or distributing employees | 18. Securities agents, brokers, and investment advisors |

Likewise, the second list indicates some jobs that require disclosure of criminal convictions and background checks.³¹

³⁰ Division of Labor Market and Demographic Research, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. (July 18, 2008). *Impact of a Prior Criminal Conviction on Private Employment Opportunities in New Jersey*. Trenton, New Jersey. Author. p 4-5.

³¹ Ibid.

1. Alcohol and drug counselors
2. Casino employees
3. Residential child care staff
4. Children's group home staff
5. Domestic violence shelter staff
6. Home Health aides
7. Nursing home staff
8. Nurse's aides and personal care assistants
9. Insurance adjusters
10. Social workers
11. Real estate sales personnel and appraisers
12. Solid and hazardous waste disposal personnel

Although for some employers who are reluctant to hire ex-offenders, incentives such as tax credits and bonding programs are inducements that sometimes make the proposition more attractive. New occupational areas such as green jobs may also provide opportunities for employment and skill training.

Recommendations

Below we present specific recommendations for improving education in the correction environment. It should be noted, however, that offenders enter DOC at various levels of educational readiness. All too often, they are products of school systems and homes that have failed to provide the necessary supports for them to make satisfactory progress in the educational arena. Though society is asking the correction system to make up for the neglect and failure of other social institutions, it is imperative that we provide offenders, while they are incarcerated, with a quality “second chance” at education to build a solid foundation of academic and occupational skills. For those with severe learning deficits, educational progress will be measured in small increments, but nevertheless, these opportunities can contribute to the betterment of individuals and improve their chances of success upon release.

First, among our recommendations, we offer an overarching one that will affect the future governance of the system.

- I. **We recommend the creation, by statute, of a high-level, blue-ribbon commission that reports directly to the Governor and legislature. The Commission will define goals, set performance standards and annually evaluate the education programs of the corrections system. Additionally, this Commission will be responsible for overseeing the full implementation of all policy changes adopted by the Governor as a result of this report. This Commission will be known as the Corrections Policy Education Commission (CPEC).**

The broad-based membership of this Commission should reflect the diverse perspectives of key stakeholders, including judges, legislators, police chiefs,

prosecutors, sheriffs, appropriate unions, an ex-offender from both the adult system and the juvenile system (or offender advocacy groups or a parent of a juvenile offender), along with representation from the Departments of Corrections, Education and Labor and Workforce Development, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Attorney General's Office, the State Parole Board, the Commission on Higher Education, the State Employment and Training Commission, community colleges, county vocational schools and the private sector. Staff should be provided to assist the Commission in its work.*

We are convinced that corrections, including juvenile justice and the county-based correction systems, must be tightly connected to other parts of the criminal justice and workforce and education systems. The creation of transparent rehabilitation goals and outcomes, particularly those related to education and workforce, should be developed by a broad cross-section of the stakeholders of the correction system as suggested in the proposed membership of the CPEC. The correction system should be held accountable for achieving specific and transparent goals, as should State government for adequately funding the necessary programs. Simply put, such a high level commission can help ensure that education is more fully integrated into the fabric of adult, juvenile, and county-based correction systems. Such a commission, with a clear mandate from the Governor and the Legislature, will help maintain standards, be able to measure system performance including outcomes, and recommend adjustments where needed. Finally, the Department of Corrections, the Juvenile Justice Commission, and county-based correction and detention systems should report specific outcomes data identified and requested by the CPEC.

* We are fully aware that a Commission that includes a representative from all the stakeholder categories may make the body too unwieldy. We offer the broad list only to be suggestive of the diverse perspectives that must be considered in forming the Commission and deliberating on issues.

Improving Education Opportunities

- II. The adult and juvenile systems must establish education programs that help individuals acquire knowledge, skills and credentials that equip them to make effective choices when responding to life's challenges.**

Too often education is only a secondary consideration in the incarceration plan for offenders. In the adult system in New Jersey, education is not required regardless of the level of education deficiency, though most offenders enter the system with low basic skills. Offenders get some time credits for attending school. However, waiting lists for placement in education programs and the absence of a coherent education/rehabilitation plan have an adverse impact on participation. Funding for education is inadequate and even with an infusion of additional money, it would be difficult to meet the demand given the predominate model of classroom delivery.

The State Facility Education Act (SFEA) provides a dedicated source of funding for education programs and services for students who are 20 years of age or younger, enrolled in education programs, and have not yet earned a high school diploma or equivalent. These eligible students can be found in both the adult and juvenile systems, but only a small portion of DOC's population (about 3%) meet this age requirement.³²

Education fairs somewhat better in the juvenile justice system because of the age of its population, the accompanying mandate to provide educational services for juveniles, and the availability of SFEA funding for the majority of its population. However, this system could benefit from a renewed commitment that better focuses on preparing youthful offenders for school and work transitions.

³² Data source: New Jersey Department of Corrections. Offender by Age Group statistics report, 2006. <http://www.state.nj.us/corrections>

1. Request both DOC and JJC to submit a correction education plan to the CPEC. The plan should discuss the administrative structure for education programs and outline how each agency will ensure the full integration of education into the corrections environment.
2. Ensure that DOC is accountable to the CPEC for administering an educational skills assessment to all newly admitted offenders and monitoring their progress in obtaining appropriate skills and credentials to improve their chances of successful reentry. Some inmates may be reluctant to take a test at intake. However, in their orientation, if the importance of the assessment to developing their educational plan and the benefit to their development are emphasized, they may be more willing to cooperate.
3. Require all offenders who do not have a high school diploma or GED or who test below a 9th grade-level on a standardized education skills assessment to participate in education programs until they meet this criteria. All offenders below the 9th grade-level threshold should be assessed at regular intervals to measure their skill attainment and this data should be reported to the parole board. Appropriate incentives for participation and disincentives for not should be instituted system wide. Twenty-two of the 50 states and the Federal government, according to a survey conducted in 2002, have adopted legislation or implemented policy requiring mandatory education for prisoners,³³ *but not New Jersey*.
4. Expand the school hours for juvenile offenders. JJC indicates that they are looking to increase the number of hours juveniles can spend in school. We fully support this effort.
5. Improve cost efficiencies through distance learning, computer-based instruction, and resource leveraging.
6. Allocate adequate funding to support an increased emphasis on correction education. Though cost efficiency can be realized with the use of

³³ Crayton and Neusteter, *Prisoner Reentry Institute John Jay College of Criminal Justice*. (Commissioned in preparation for the Reentry Roundtable on Education on March 31 and April 1, 2008). <http://jjay.cuny.edu/centerinstitutes/pri/publications.asp>.

technology and inmates working as teacher aides, among others, to implement a comprehensive correction education plan will require a dedicated source of additional State funding.

7. Ensure that offenders have every opportunity to enroll in education programs and successfully complete them. Though there are many reasons for reassigning inmates to different programs or other institutions, when making these decisions every effort should be made to maintain continuity in the offenders' educational pursuits. It should be noted that classification and facility security override education assignments.

Create Stronger Standards and Broader Curriculum

III. Establish guidelines and standards to ensure quality and consistency and offer a broad-based skills curriculum that correlates with reduced recidivism.

Standards must be based on goals and provide a framework for curriculum and instruction. For adult offenders, the path to a high school credential is almost always the GED; but for juveniles, completion of the local education agency requirements is more often the path, though if an individual student's needs are better served by earning a GED, that is considered. For both the juvenile and adult systems, educators must be mindful that the traditional approach to education for many of their offenders has not led to success. Therefore, a new pedagogy is needed to fully engage them in learning. Beyond the three "R's," education must encompass a broader set of skills. That is why the State adopted the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Content Standards. EFF promotes gaining facility in 16 literacy skill areas including the traditional basic skills such as math, reading, speaking, writing, but also emphasizes a broader skill menu such as using technology, listening, decision-making, cooperating with others, resolving conflict. See the EFF Skill Wheel on page 41 for a complete list of these skills. More, EFF focuses on connecting these skills to what an adult needs to know and be able to do to succeed as a worker, family

member, and community member. Rather than diverting the instructional emphasis from other important educational goals such as GED preparation, TABE score improvement or life skills development, EFF promotes gaining a deeper understanding of the skills needed to achieve these goals and developing the ability to apply these skills to everyday situations outside of the classroom.

1. Ensure all education programs in the adult system incorporate Equipped for the Future (EFF) Content Standards into instruction and prepare learners for the GED and postsecondary transition. It is critical that education build upon learners' needs and goals, and engage them as equal partners with teachers in planning and carrying out specific learning activities. EFF does this through an adult learner-focused pedagogical approach with a consistent framework. (See the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle on page 42.) All instructors in the adult correction system must be trained in this approach which is compatible with GED preparation. New Jersey Network (NJN) has produced a new EFF video series, which will be the centerpiece of an introductory training tool to help New Jersey adult educators implement EFF.
2. Determine the best educational option for each juvenile offender. JJC should continue to follow the New Jersey's Core Curriculum Standards established by the Department of Education only for those who can fulfill their educational requirements for high school during their period of incarceration or who are likely to return to their school district to earn their high school diploma. Completion of this coursework should result in credits that apply toward the traditional high school diploma. However, for all other offenders, a group who is unlikely to return to and succeed in their school district, a curriculum that follows EFF is more appropriate. This focus will help offenders gain skills that they need for adulthood and develop the skills needed to pursue a GED and further their education. Furthermore, a contextualized instructional approach as advocated in EFF

should be adopted for all juveniles to show them how to apply new knowledge and skills to more positively address real-world situations.

3. Offer a work ready curriculum that at a minimum emphasizes the skills delineated in the Work Readiness Profile (see page 40), financial literacy, and job search and success skills. We recommend using the *Preparing for Work: An EFF Work Readiness Curriculum* developed by the University of Tennessee, and working with LWD which provides training in the *Money Smart* financial literacy program and which has a wealth of job search and success resources used in the One-Stop Career Centers. Those who are being released and have at least an 8.0 grade level should have the opportunity to earn the National Work Readiness Credential (WRC) and we suggest that the SETC, LWD, and DOC develop a strategy to make this online assessment available to offenders upon release.
4. Provide an expansive curriculum that helps offenders develop a more positive perspective and a better way of responding to challenges that they will encounter when returning to society. As indicated in *Standing Corrected*, “programs that focus on career and life skills, personal health, conflict resolution, moral development, behavior management, and other skills that contribute to the rehabilitation process should be expanded to assure greater access.”³⁴

Integrate Education with Labor Market Demands

- IV. Offer career and technical education that consistently meets recognized industry and employer standards, as well as postsecondary courses that lead to an associate degree.**

³⁴ Correction Education Taskforce. Op. cit. p. 21.

DOC and JJC offer in-house programs, delivered by their own CTE instructors – who are all New Jersey State certified* – and contracted programs delivered through county education providers. Continuance of existing in-house programs seems to be more a function of the expertise and credentials of staff (instructors who are State employees), rather than labor market demand. Contracted programs provide greater flexibility because they can be short-term to respond to changes in the labor market and are not subject to the qualifications and skills of a limited number of State hired instructors.

Completing one or more years of postsecondary education enhances an individual's employability and economic prospects. For offenders whose criminal records already pose a major obstacle to employment, attainment of postsecondary credentials can tip the scales in favor of improving job prospects and higher wages. A number of states including Texas³⁵ and individual institutions such as Massachusetts Reformatory for Women at Framingham³⁶ still see the value in providing postsecondary education to inmates though the federal government has eliminated Pell grants for incarcerated persons. Studies suggest that collegiate study is positively correlated with reduced recidivism. For example, a recidivism rate of only 7% was noted for a study release program offered by the North Carolina Department of Correction in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.³⁷

1. Develop a State plan for career and technical correction education that focuses on preparing inmates for demand occupations that are open to ex-offenders. A partial listing of these jobs appears on page 17 of this document. DOC must continue to work with LWD to determine where the

* Though certification is an acceptable standard for secondary education, clearly the skills of the teacher are paramount and for postsecondary programs skills and industry-based qualifications are more relevant.

³⁵ Karpowitz, D. and Kenner, M. *Education as Crime Prevention: The Case for Reinstating Pell Grant Eligibility for the Incarcerated*. Bard Prison Initiative, Bard College. www.bard.edu/bpi/pdfs/crime_report.pdf.

³⁶ Chlup, D, T. *The Pendulum Swings 65 Years of Corrections Education, Focus on Basics, Volume 7, Issue D, September 2005*. www.ncsall.net/?id=826

³⁷ University of North Carolina, <http://fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/correctional.htm>.

greatest job opportunities exist for ex-offenders and focus training in these areas. The Conference Board's new labor market assessment tool could also be a valuable resource because it provides up-to-date data on current job openings, which could be used to identify demand, help focus training, and search for jobs.

2. Ensure that successful completion of CTE programs results in attainment of industry-based certificates.
3. Partner with county vocational schools and county colleges to expand career technical education opportunities. Even with retraining of institutional instructional staff, it will be difficult to keep pace with the dynamic skill demands and ever-changing occupational areas. Partnering with county vocational schools and county colleges provides an opportunity to more easily adjust program offerings to meet labor demand. These partnerships can also provide opportunities for in-house staff to learn new skills.
4. Align correction education programs with curriculum at county vocational and technical schools and community colleges to meet industry standards. Once alignment is achieved, State-level transfer policies should be established that can be systematized much the way NJ Transfer works at the postsecondary level. When offenders are released, they should be able to transfer applicable credits and learning experiences to these institutions.
5. Expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training opportunities within the correctional setting for demand occupations. Apprenticeships are a well proven model for vocational and occupational skill development. Currently offering only a limited number of apprenticeships, DOC should work with the US Department of Labor and LWD to determine if additional opportunities exist to establish apprenticeships within New Jersey correctional institutions. Through pre-apprenticeships, adult and juvenile offenders can develop the prerequisite skills to enter an apprenticeship program, as well as explore occupational areas. These programs not only

prepare offenders to enter an apprenticeship within or outside of the institution, but also provide entry-level skills for occupational areas. Realizing that space and cost impose significant limitations, particular emphasis should be placed on expanding apprenticeship opportunities where the “facilities” already exist within the correction system. Some examples might include: culinary arts utilizing the facility kitchen to acquire OJT hours; HVAC and electrical apprenticeships utilizing the existing systems within the correctional facility for learning and OJT hours; and general maintenance and repair apprenticeships.

6. Ensure that offenders who complete apprenticeship training that is included in the New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJ PLACE) understand how they can receive college credit for this training.
7. Work with organized labor to ensure that appropriate training meets their standards and can articulate into their apprenticeship programs. Labor can also help identify skilled tradespersons to provide training.
8. Partner with the State’s public colleges to offer courses that lead to associate degrees. Inmate fees or revenues from institutional commissary could be used to help support these programs.

Increase Use of Technology

V. Expand the use of technology to facilitate skill acquisition and personal development.

Technology-delivered courses can be cost-effective and provide a much broader array of content than possible through institutional classroom-based programs. Access to this technology can expand educational opportunities, as well as enable offenders to gain facility in the use of information and communication technology skills which are becoming essential for leading productive lives in the 21st century. There are an increasing number of certificate programs, such as those offered by

Microsoft and Adobe, which are delivered online. While there are legitimate security concerns with unfettered use of the Internet by prisoners, information and computer technology and software has created a whole new frontier for learning, which should be explored for its applicability to this population. DOC indicates that it utilizes Intranet-based delivery systems. It is essential that this technology employ the most up-to-date software and programs fully to expand learning options for inmates throughout the system.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has established Learning Links, computer-based learning centers, in eight institutions. These individualized, self-paced instructional centers provide an array of basic academic and work skills training. JJC uses computer video technology to facilitate distance learning.

Through support from the Nicholson Foundation, the *Computer-based Learning from Prison to Community* initiative is being piloted to help incarcerated women develop the skills needed to secure employment upon release from prison. The program is designed to catalyze lifelong learning that starts at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women and continues at Bo Robinson Assessment Unit and Kintock Group Halfway House through release. This innovative distance learning program uses a Local Area Network (LAN) to provide literacy skills content and to teach computer and Internet skills. Women are able to continue their learning at home upon release to the community. This program is being evaluated by the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers University.

The Alaska Department of Corrections uses a secure Internet-based system to provide prison legal research through LexisNexis.³⁸ New Jersey should explore whether this type of technology solution could be used to deliver educational content within correctional institutions. Free courses are also available online, such as Microsoft Office.

³⁸ Lexis/Nexus website. www.lexisnexis.com/about/releases/0845.asp.

The Correctional Education Association, in partnership with the Milwaukee Area Technical College and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, provides college credit courses to subscribing facilities via the satellite services of the Transforming Lives Network. This partnership is offering courses to over 900 member correctional facilities nationwide via satellite and correspondence and is currently available at eleven NJ DOC facilities. These courses lead to an Associate of Arts Degree.

Television also offers a broad array of programming that can be used to stimulate learning. New Jersey Network (NJN), as well as many other stations, provides high quality education programs that could be harnessed as part of an institutional learning initiative.

1. Convene a committee to recommend policy for the appropriate uses of technology to facilitate learning in adult and juvenile institutions. The distance learning project at Edna Mahan cited above shows that computer technology can be used to deliver education programs while satisfying institutional security concerns. There are now eight Learning Links operating in DOC institutions and educational television offers promise for creating additional learning opportunities. JJC uses computer video technology to expand education options to include local high school and college offerings. Clearly technology is being utilized, but there is a need for an informed, unified State-level policy to guide program development and to help avoid pitfalls. This committee should be broad-based and include representatives from the correction systems and the broader education, workforce development, and communications technologies communities. Among the many resources the committee should review is *The Effective Use of Technology in Corrections Education* developed for the Reentry Roundtable, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.³⁹

³⁹ Borden, C and Richardson, P. *The Effective Use of Technology in Corrections Education*. The Reentry Roundtable on Education on March 31 and April 1, 2008.

2. Initiate the *Computer-based Learning from Prison to Community* model cited above in at least one male institution to determine its applicability for this population.
3. Study and evaluate the use of technology to facilitate learning in correctional institutions. DOC and JJC should work with the Rutgers University Center for Women and Work (CWW), which has developed expertise in evaluating the use and value of technology to facilitate distance learning, to identify and research key questions. CWW's findings should inform the policy work of the technology committee recommended above. (See page 46 for a general list of strategies and best practices for distance learning projects submitted by the CWW to the SETC.)
4. Utilize television as a tool to create learning opportunities both in the classroom and in the housing units. Corrections should work with NJN to identify education programs, create a viewing schedule, and where appropriate identify or develop supporting activities and/or materials. DOC has indicated that it purchased educational DVDs from NJN.

Create a Learning Environment

VI. Correctional institutions should take better advantage of the correctional setting to provide learning opportunities and skill development.

In reviewing findings of a longitudinal study by the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Post Release Employment project, ETS noted that, "[p]risoners who gained work experience in prison industries were 24% less likely to recidivate, and those who participated in apprenticeships and vocational training were 33 percent less likely."⁴⁰ Offenders, like the general population, are continually learning from their environment. Many of the lessons learned as a result of interaction with fellow

⁴⁰ Coley, R. and Barton, P. (2006). *Locked Up and Locked Out: An Educational Perspective on the U.S. Prison Population*. Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service. p. 22.

inmates, unfortunately, reinforce negative attitudes and behaviors. To the extent that correction officials can take advantage of prisoner work assignments, library resources, and other institutional programs and activities to teach marketable skills and promote positive behavior, the correctional environment can provide opportunities to facilitate positive learning beyond the classroom. For example, the Missouri Department of Corrections has established a hybrid apprenticeship program that provides training in 50 occupations linked to 26 prison industry programs. Offenders get their training on the factory floor, instructed by staff and skilled offenders.

1. Create opportunities through work assignments and other activities to facilitate learning and develop marketable skills. This point is made both by the Reentry Policy Council and the SETC in *Standing Corrected*. Offenders need opportunities in their daily institutional life to apply and practice skills and knowledge. “Training and work should be developed in tandem, so work assignments can make use of skills that a person in prison or jail receives as part of his or her institutional vocational training”⁴¹ (The Reentry Policy Council). As EFF stresses, students must see the relevance of their learning and understand how they can use the knowledge and skills in their real life situations.
2. Utilize institutional libraries as a resource to facilitate self-directed learning. Library staff should be trained to help learners pursue positive interests. Libraries should be equipped with appropriate learning technologies for different interests and levels, suitably modified to maintain institutional security.

⁴¹ The Reentry Policy Council.
<http://reentrypolicy.org/Report/PartII/ChapterII-B/PolicyStatement16/Recommendation16-A>.

Staff Development

VII. Enhance the capacity of correctional staff to develop, deliver, and support improved and expanded educational strategies.

Throughout this report, we assert that education is a key factor in reducing recidivism. We recommend significant changes to expand and improve educational opportunities both within and outside the correctional classroom setting. To accomplish this change in direction, correctional staff will need information to buy into the new focus, and have opportunities to develop skills to support this approach. It is worth noting that all corrections education teachers are NJ State certified.

Interestingly, one of the two New Jersey teachers selected to participate in an EFF training video produced by NJN was from DOC. Although we are certain that the expanded use of technology will broaden the capacity of institutions to provide educational opportunities for the incarcerated population, it will also increase the need for more educators who must be well-versed in using technology to facilitate and support learning.

1. Ensure that all teachers in DOC operated institutions have the opportunity to improve their professional knowledge and competency in adult education and instructional delivery. DOC currently adheres to high professional standards for its teachers, including requiring State certification for all of its teachers. However, since New Jersey does not offer a teacher certificate endorsement for adult education, we recommend that DOC include in its standard a requirement for experience or training in adult education. Furthermore, teachers should have basic computer knowledge and receive training in cultural and individual differences.*
2. Offer retraining opportunities for vocational instructors. It is essential that instructors are given opportunities to upgrade their skills so they can

* See page 43 for the Adult Education Standards adopted by LWD which address this issue.

deliver curriculum that is inline with industry standards and that focuses on occupational areas that are receptive to ex-offender employment.

3. Provide training and information sessions for correctional staff. The success of this initiative will require commitment from more than just correction educators. Strategies that inform and help all staff acquire skills to support education and rehabilitation efforts are essential.

Transitions to Work

VIII. Establish a system to facilitate transitions to work, education, and training.

As indicated earlier, the overwhelming majority of offenders will be released back to society at some point. How they return, that is how well they are prepared to lead productive lives, must be a concern of the correction system. In fulfilling its obligation to rehabilitate offenders and help them transition to productive lives upon release, DOC should continue and expand relationships with the workforce investment system to connect individuals to the programs and services they will need to be successful. Although DOC and JJC provide transitional programs for offenders, we think that these efforts should be strengthened and all returning offenders should have access to services that assist them in continuing their education, pursuing work-related training, and finding gainful employment, as well as having access to the variety of social support services. Correctional institutions do provide annual career fairs and related job readiness training. DOC should continue to work with LWD and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to ensure that they play a major role in these events.

The Reentry Policy Council notes connecting prisoners to jobs in advance of their release is a critical step to facilitating a successful reentry. However, the search for employment is hindered by barriers, such as lack of educational credentials, limited

work history, poor planning skills, and employers' prejudice toward hiring ex-offenders.

1. Engage local workforce investment areas along with the SETC, DOC, LWD, Parole, and Attorney General's Office to develop pre-release and post-release strategies that help offenders transition to education, employment, and training services. There needs to be both an overall State-level plan for reentry, and local strategies that address individual needs and local labor market demand. At the State-level, agencies should convene on a regularly scheduled basis to develop policy and coordinate State efforts toward reentry. At the local level, the WIB and One-Stop Career Center should work with parole, other criminal justice agencies, education and social service providers, and employers to implement specific strategies to connect ex-offenders to appropriate services and employment opportunities.
2. Require as part of the parole process that returning offenders connect to the One-Stop Career Center System. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has taken strides to tailor One-Stop services to address the needs of returning offenders.
3. Ensure that all offenders are made aware of and have access to printed and electronic resources that provide valuable information to assist them in transitioning back into society. As examples: DOC, through its Office of Transitional Services, has created a resource template that local areas can use to develop guides, which DOC will print for them. These guides provide useful information that focuses on local resources for individuals returning to their communities; and, John Jay College of Criminal Justice through its Prisoner Reentry Institute has developed *Back to School: A Guide to Continuing Your Education after Prison*.⁴²

⁴² Anna, C. and Lindahl, N. (2007). *Back to School: A Guide to Continuing Your Education after Prison*. New York, NY: Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

4. Develop two to four pilot reentry initiatives that provide education and work experience for returning offenders. According to the Urban Institute, Essex and Camden counties accounted for 31% of the returning offender population in 2002 and among this group 13% went back to Newark, and 10%, to Camden. With the ability to track where offenders return, we should focus programs in the area of greatest need. The design of these pilots should be based on proven strategies, (see recommendations from the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice at www.njisj.org and the Reentry Policy Council at www.reentrypolicy.org), but should take advantage of information communications technology and distance learning initiatives that focus on development of marketable skills. MOU's should be established with One-Stop Career Centers to incorporate workforce development services into these pilot initiatives.
5. Create new education and training alternatives for young people who are leaving JJC and DOC facilities. Returning to a traditional program at the local school to earn a secondary diploma may be an appropriate option for some young offenders, while enrolling in a GED program a suitable route for others. On the other hand, many young people would benefit from alternatives that focus on competency-based, contextualized curricula and the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed at work and in postsecondary education. The county colleges should be asked to develop programs where youthful offenders could complete their high school graduation requirement and begin postsecondary school. A promising approach to working with low skilled, at-risk youth and young adults is being piloted by Washington DC's higher education system. This initiative, titled **The 13th Year**, uses computer-based learning software to facilitate basic skills instruction taught in a highly work-related context. Similarly, Camden County College recently developed an interesting proposal along these lines. Also Union County College is partnering with the New Jersey State Parole Board and the Nicholson Foundation to launch a Prisoner Reentry initiative that provides education, job development, and other

services to ex-offenders returning to Union County. These and similar initiatives, which highlight the capacity of county colleges to serve this population, should be fully explored.

Improving Data Collection

IX. Correction education and the correction system (adult and juvenile) must become more outcomes data-driven.

Outcomes data is essential to understanding what is working and what is not. In the introductory paragraph of these recommendations, we call for convening a high-level blue-ribbon committee. Among its responsibilities should be to identify key education and employment outcomes indicators that should be tracked by each of the three correction systems. This data should then be used to evaluate the systems and to determine best practices and areas for improvement.

As part of the Governor's Crime Plan initiative, the SETC recommended that ex-offenders' employment outcomes be tracked using wage record data. As a result, a signed agreement between the Departments of Corrections and Labor and Workforce Development and the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University is being developed to conduct a pilot study that tracks the employment outcomes of ex-offenders using wage record data for the past three years.

1. Establish transparent goals for correction education and reentry, and identify specific data needed to measure status of goals accomplishment. This should be done as a function of the Corrections Policy Education Commission – the creation of this body is previously recommended in this document. A valuable resource in identifying data points is the Correctional Education Data Network which has developed a guidebook that summarizes key policy issues in corrections education and provides the variables and suggested coding instructions for the data needed to

address these policy issues. Correction Education Data Network can be accessed at www.cedatane트워크.org/index.html.

2. Report to the Corrections Policy Education Commission on an annual basis the status of corrections education, within adult correction, juvenile and county-based institutional systems and reentry outcome data. This report must include data on the participation levels in corrections education programs, educational progress and attainment of appropriate credentials, continued engagement in education and training upon reentry, and labor market outcomes.

The Work Readiness Profile

What New Workers in Entry Level Jobs Need to Be Able to Do

New workers
need to be able to
use these EFF Skills*...

Communication Skills

Speak So Others Can Understand
Listen Actively
Read With Understanding
Observe Critically

Interpersonal Skills

Cooperate With Others
Resolve Conflict and Negotiate

Decision Making Skills

Use Math to Solve Problems and
Communicate
Solve Problems and Make Decisions

Lifelong Learning Skills

Take Responsibility for Learning
Use Information and Communications
Technology

**Based on Equipped for the Future Standards*

well enough to successfully carry out these critical entry level tasks:

Acquire, use and share information accurately and in a timely manner.

Use appropriate technology to get the job done.

Understand Systems.

Monitor and Correct Performance.

Work as part of a team to achieve goals and objectives.

Work through conflict constructively.

Provide direct, accurate and timely responses to customer questions and concerns.

Take responsibility for completing one's own work accurately, on time, to a high standard of quality.

Demonstrate integrity.

Avoid absenteeism.

Demonstrate promptness.

Maintain appropriate grooming and hygiene.

Manage time effectively.

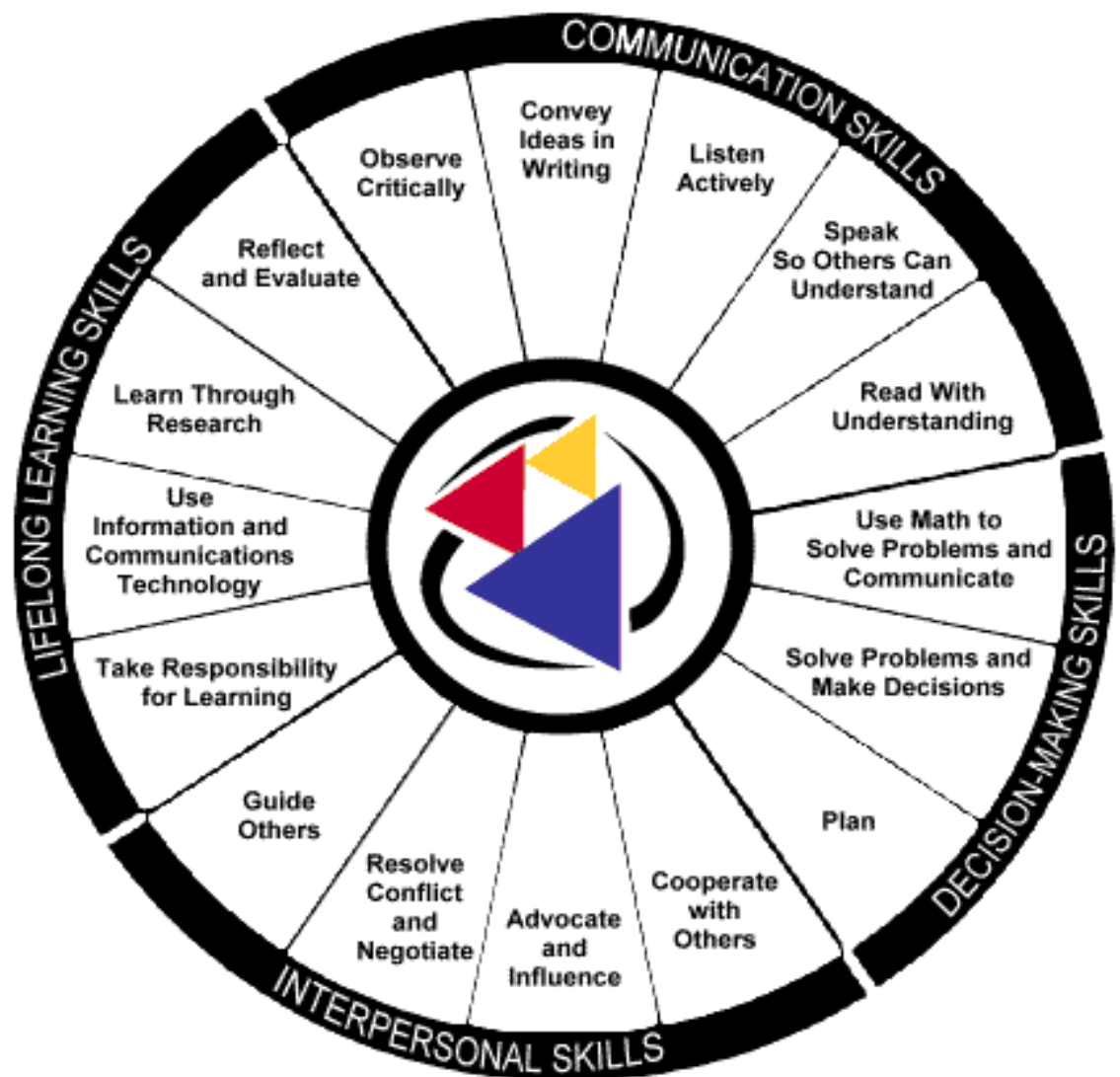
Cope with a work situation or tasks that change frequently.

Identify actual or potential problems related to one's own work: report them, and help to fix them.

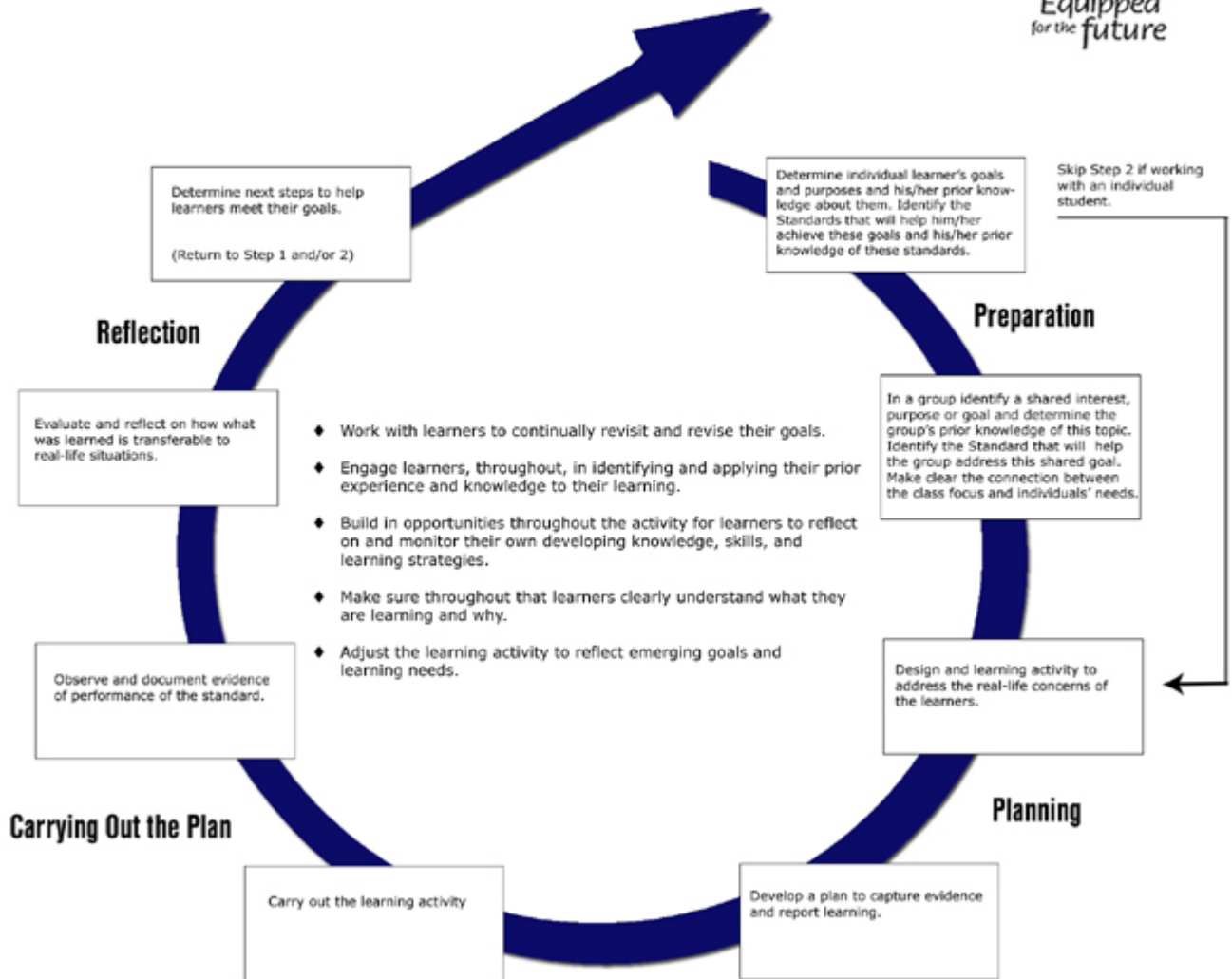
Learn new/additional skills related to your job.



Equipped for the Future Standards



The EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle



New Jersey Adult Education Teacher Standards

All teachers/instructors in New Jersey-funded adult literacy programs are expected to possess cognitive, affective skill-sets, androgogical (adult education pedagogical) competencies gained through experience or in area of study necessary to facilitate adult learning, and an awareness and sensitivity to differences in people and cultures. New Jersey has adopted the Equipped for the Future (EFF) content standards; therefore all teachers/instructors are expected to be trained in the EFF and incorporate the content standards in the instructional design and implementation of curriculum.

In addition, the following standards apply to adult education instructional staff hired on or after July 1, 2008, to work in any program funded through the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD). Incumbent adult education instructional staff who do not meet the applicable requirements outlined in standards 1 through 5 below are grandfathered until December 31, 2010, at which time all teacher/instructors must meet the following standards.

These are minimum standards; individual programs may impose additional requirements.

Standard 1:

For paid full-time or part-time teachers/instructors, a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university is required. Agencies providing instruction that requires New Jersey certification must apply this standard to adult education teachers as well. New Jersey teaching certification is strongly recommended for all teachers/instructors, but not required.

Standard 2:

For paid full-time or part-time paraprofessional staff, a minimum of an associate's degree from a regionally accredited college or university is required.

Standard 3:

For paid full-time or part-time teachers/instructors, a minimum of one year's experience in an adult education setting with emphasis on teaching, curriculum, training, and/or program development is required with the following exceptions: a master's degree in education or related field, or relevant and documented coursework or mentoring program may be substituted for one year's experience.

Standard 4:

All teachers/instructors must have basic knowledge of computers to sufficiently incorporate effective uses of technology in order to support student learning and classroom management. This includes the use of email, Internet researching, and word processing.

Teachers/instructors in computer-based classroom or lab instruction must additionally demonstrate proficiency in the following:

- Ability to facilitate access for all students through basic assistance, troubleshooting, navigating software and using internet resources.
- Ability to use technology to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students.
- Ability to use existing computer-based reporting systems and or strategies, or create needed report devices to keep student records up-to-date and report statistics to management.

Proficiency in the above skills must be demonstrated prior to hire.

Standard 5:

Paid full-time or part-time teachers/instructors must attain a minimum of six (6) hours per year of professional development and training in adult education or another area relevant to their teaching. Professional development and training

must be approved by program director in accordance with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development guidelines.

In addition to the above annual six hour requirement for professional development, all full-time and part-time teachers/instructors, paraprofessionals and aides must complete, on a bi-annual schedule, approved training in cultural and individual differences as applicable in the adult education classroom by an appropriate provider.

February 7, 2008

NJ Teacher Standards Sub Committee/SCALES

Strategies and Best Practices for Distance Learning

Rutgers University, Center for Women and Work research demonstrates clearly the importance of implementing certain programmatic strategies and 'best practices' if success is to be achieved in a correctional environment. These include:

1. *Develop a comprehensive understanding of how online learning works among all stake-holders.* It is very important that all key players share the same understanding of the online learning program so that there is no disconnect between the conceptualization and the operationalization of the project. It is helpful to clearly set out the expectations of the project and provide materials for those working on the project to draw from during its implementation. The Nicholson Foundation has done admirably in providing tools for basic communication and problem-solving among all the partnering groups. Our project advisor from the foundation has played a powerful and critically important coordination role— far beyond mere convener—by using monthly meetings, telephone conferences, and email correspondence to monitor program developments. This is important as previous research on on-line learning has demonstrated unequivocally that the most important criteria for good collaboration in building a successful program are effective communication and active and immediate problem solving.
2. *Provide adequate staffing for the project at each of the sites.* An online learning program can be labor intensive in both the initial set-up and follow-up. The ideal staffing model consists of a project director, who will interact and support participants, organize support groups, provide guidance and job coaching, serve as the central point person, and be helpful to the participant upon release as the program transitions to the community, a technical support person, and an educational support person who can address course content.
3. *Carefully evaluate programmatic and technical options, including educational vendors and Internet service providers.* There are many different vendors to choose from and in making this decision it is important to assess target

population's needs, and desired outcomes for the project. Other pilot projects have chosen different variations of vendors including

- *Those which provide computers, courses, technical support and orientation*
- *Those which provide only education programming*
- *Those which provide both technical support and education programming*

4. *Ensure that equipment is familiar and flexible.* The computer labs at each site in the program are identical in the hardware and software available. This likeness in the computers fosters a familiarity, and allows ease in transitions from site to site. Upon reentry participants begin to use laptop computers, which provide participants with greater flexibility in terms of where and when they can complete their coursework.
5. *Provide a flexible and thereby “blended model” of learning.* Research by the Center for Women and Work at Rutgers has shown that distance learning is most successful when coupled with face-to-face class time meetings and personal interaction. This simply means building into any intensive online curriculum as many interactive and social activities for the class as possible. These can be led by the instructors and sometimes even the students.
6. *Develop a comprehensive assessment process of all potential applicants for the project.* Computer- based learning is not for everyone it ---it requires time management, self-discipline and motivation. It is also helpful if participants have some computer literacy skills. As such it is important to develop a method for selecting participants who may be best served by this type of program.
7. *Encourage “buy in” up-front by program participants.* For any program to be successful, its participants have to believe that they can benefit from the experience. One of the best ways of achieving such “buy-in” is to explain to the participants from the beginning, fully and continually, how such a continuous-learning computer based program relates to 1) their transition and financial well-being when returning to the community and 2) their personal educational and employment goals, hopes and dreams.

8. *Develop an awareness of different participants' learning styles.* Some previous pilot programs have found that developing supplementary material and study guides is beneficial to some types of learners. Different participants bring different levels of skills into the program. Recognizing this, a good program is designed to fit the needs of each individual by offering variations in course levels and educational exercises. Participants are able to work at their own pace and they have a choice of learning topics.
9. *Provide comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the program.* This project has demonstrated that the role of monitoring by an outside body is every useful in keeping the program on track, sharing information about best practices, highlighting and addressing problems and obstacles as they arise, and maintaining continuity among the different sites of the program.
10. *Always look and plan beyond incarceration!* Too many learning programs in prisons fail to relate training to an inmate's future job prospects in the community. The strength of this initiative is its ability to facilitate successful job prospects and community reentry via *continued* computer-based learning and increased credentials, familiarizing inmates upfront about One-Stop resources and know-how, and linking them to One-Stops upon release as a critical component of the initiative.