## Correctional Education Programming

## OVERVIEW:

Elected officials and policy makers throughout the United States are examining policies of incarceration. Prison populations and costs have skyrocketed over the past two decades. While prisoners are serving shorter terms, they return to prisons at rates above 50%. Violent crime rates have gone down, but incarceration for drug crimes is up dramatically – in Illinois, prison admissions for drug crimes rose from 8% of prison admissions in 1985 to 40% in 2005.

There are over two million prisoners in state and federal prisons[1], and in Illinois the adult prison population alone is almost 45,000.[2] The Illinois prison population increased by more than 500% from 1970 to 2005. Unless changes are made, this growth is not expected to let up anytime soon. A 2007 report by The Pew Charitable Trusts projects that by 2011 that number will increase to 49,497.[3] In an already crowded system, this would require that Illinois build more prisons, at the astronomical cost of $250 million a piece plus yearly operating expenses.[4] Policy makers are examining strategies to reduce crime while also reducing incarceration in order to avoid future costs to taxpayers.

One policy focus has been "reentry" and efforts to prevent recidivism, or the return to prison. If prisoners are better prepared to return to their communities, to get jobs and to become productive members of society, they are less likely to commit future crimes. A key to success in reentry is being able to earn a sustainable living. "Formerly incarcerated individuals with jobs – and with the associated economic resources, structure and self-esteem that stable employment provides – are three times less likely to return to prison than those without jobs."[5]

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[1] Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006. < http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm>.

[2] "Department Data" report, Illinois Department of Corrections, 2005.

[3] *Public Safety, Public Spending: Projecting America's Prison Population 2007-2011.* Pew Charitable Trusts, February 2007.

[4] Aos, Steven et al. "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates." Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006.

[5] "Rebuilding Lives. Restoring Hope. Strengthening Communities: Breaking the Cycle of Incarceration and Building Brighter Futures in Chicago." Final Report of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Reentry, January, 2006, citing 12-month follow-up with Project RIO in Texas. Also, from "Ready4Work In Brief: Update on Outcomes; Reentry May Be Critical for States, Cities." Public/Private Ventures *In Brief*, Issue 6, May 2007.: From outcomes data from the 11 adult Ready4Work sites funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and Justice and the Annie E. Casey and Ford foundations as a three-year demonstration project: "Just 2.5 percent of Ready4Work participants returned to state prison with a new offense within six months of their release (compared to 5 percent nationally), and only 6.9 percent did so within one year (compared to 10.4 percent nationally)." From "Current Strategies for Reducing Recidivism" by the Center for Impact Research, August 2004: "Employment services program address the need of released inmates to find work and typically include job preparedness, career development skills, and job placement. The report specifically discusses New York's Community and Law Enforcement Resources Together program (ComALERT) as an example, which reports recidivism rates of 17 percent compared to 41 percent for those who do not participate in the program."

Most jobs require at least some basic education, and the vast majority of prisoners come into prison with very low education levels, often with basic literacy as a challenge. More than half of those entering Illinois prisoners in 2004 lacked a high school diploma or equivalent, compared to 15% in the overall population in Illinois.

Before the burgeoning growth of the prison population in the 1980s and 1990s, reformation and rehabilitation was the goal of imprisonment, and education was more readily available to prisoners to help them back on the path to productivity. With an increased focus on incapacitation and crime control, funding for in-prison educational programs as a percentage of corrections budgets across the country has decreased over the past fifteen years. Across the country, participation rates in the programs that exist have not kept pace with the rising rate of imprisonment, leading to a steady decline in the number of prisoners benefiting from in-prison education.

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) has developed a series of model initiatives, including the Sheridan and Southwest Illinois prison drug treatment and reentry programs, focused on preparing inmates for and supporting them upon release. Even though there have been reductions in Illinois' recidivism rate in recent years, still over half of all released inmates return to prison within three years. This costly "revolving door" requires policy makers to examine how correctional dollars are being spent and what improvements can be made to in-prison programming – especially with respect to correctional education – that will lead to better outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals and society at-large.

This paper outlines the current situation of correctional education in Illinois, with some national context provided. It also includes recommendations for additional support for educational programming. (A glossary describing the different types of educational programming is included as Appendix A.)

## BACKGROUND ON CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION:

Education has been a part of the correctional system since its inception in the late 18th century. The first American prison – the Walnut Street Jail – included a school that focused on moral and religious instruction to help in the process of penitence. The reformation era, which began in 1876 and was led by Zebulon R. Brockway, introduced the idea of rehabilitation with an emphasis on education and training. Brockway's reformatory became the model for both adult and juvenile prisons throughout the U.S. Over the next 100 years, the goal of prisons was to "correct" through rehabilitation, in which academic and vocational education programs were played a primary role. Educational programming expanded from basic literacy programs to include opportunities for a high school diploma or equivalent General Educational Development (GED) certification, vocational education, life skills training, postsecondary and college coursework, and educational release.[6] [7]

[6] MacKenzie, Doris L. "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[7] Crayton, Anna and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter. "The Current State of Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.

Beginning in the 1980s, the focus of corrections shifted from rehabilitation to crime control, emphasizing incapacitation, deterrence and retribution. Support for correctional education, particularly at the federal level, waned. Many state prisons offer at least some kind of educational programming; but they cannot meet prisoner need. While it varies among different states and different facilities, most state prisons offer basic adult education and secondary education. Only 26.7% of state prisons offer college courses, and a little over half (55.7%) provide vocational training.[8] Overall, these programs reach fewer than half of the prisoners over the course of their incarceration.[9]

The Illinois Constitution provides that "All penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship."[10] Echoing this principle, the Illinois Code of Corrections states that convicts must be "restored to useful citizenship."[11] In an economy where education is a prerequisite for most living wage and legal jobs, that restoration must include education. In 1972, legislation created School District 428, a separate district for the prisons[12].

## INMATE EDUCATION LEVELS:

The prison population has been called the "most educationally disadvantaged population in the United States."[13] Nationally, fewer than 50% of state prisoners have a high school diploma, compared to 75% of the general population.[14] In Illinois, the statistics are even more startling. Only 25% of Illinois inmates have completed high school, and 36% have not completed the ninth grade.[15] Additionally, completing ninth grade or high school does not guarantee that an inmate will have basic literacy or math skills. In fact, 38% of incoming inmates test below a sixth-grade

[8] MacKenzie, Doris L. "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[9] Harlow, Caroline Wolf. "Education and Correctional Populations." Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, January 2003.
[10] Article I (?), Section 12. *Illinois Constitution Bill of Rights*
[11] Illinois Code of Corrections, Section 1-1-2. < http://www.ilga.gov>. Accessed August 13, 2007
[12] In 2006, the school board was transferred to the newly created Department of Juvenile Justice, but maintained responsibility for adult education as well.
[13] Crayton, Anna and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter. "The Current State of Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008, citing Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Cataldi, & Tauschek 2004, p.1.
[14] Lawrence, Sarah et al. "The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming." Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, May 2002.
[15] *Returning Home: The Challenges of Reentry for the formerly incarcerated and those living with a criminal record: Hearing before the Governor's Community Safety and Reentry Working Group: Employability, Education, and Training Subcommittee,* testimony of Karen Scheffels, Executive Director, The Literacy Council (April 12, 2005),.

level on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).[16] While 48% of the total U.S. population has attended some college, only 11% of state prisoners have.[17]

Inmate education levels are particularly low for minorities, who make up a disproportionate share of the prison population in Illinois and nationwide. Approximately 44% of African Americans and 53% of Latinos in state prisons do not have a high school diploma or a GED compared to 27% of whites.[18]

Given these dramatic facts, starting in the 1970s, Illinois policy makers had tried to emphasize the importance of education inside its institutions and immediately after prisoners are released. The Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) program was established in the mid-1970s to provide jobs to inmates in industries that create goods and services used in the prisons, such as sewing uniforms and processing food, as well as making goods that can be sold to other state agencies and other governments, such as furniture and office equipment. The idea is to provide the chance for inmates to develop job skills and work habits that will translate into careers upon release; however, the ICI program also benefits the state agencies that have access to cheaper goods. Two percent (2%) of the prison population, or approximately 1,000 inmates, participates in ICI.

Since 1987, all prisoners are tested to determine their educational levels and, according to state statute, those whose achievement falls below a sixth-grade level must attend Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. Those who have met basic education requirements may then enroll in the General Educational Development (GED) program to get the equivalent of a high school diploma. Currently, fewer than 2,000 of the nearly 40,000 prisoners leaving Illinois prison each year obtain their diploma while incarcerated. With estimates that 50-75% of the prison population lacks a GED, the number in need of a GED upon release may be 10-15 times that number.

To encourage more prisoners to earn their GEDs while in prison, legislation passed in 2005 charged the department to double the percentage of prisoners who enroll in GED classes, and another law reduces parole time if a former prisoner earns a GED. While considered a step in the right direction, no new resources were provided to meet this goal, which according to the prisoner guard union's research has negatively impacted the quality of the program with larger class sizes and two-hour instead of three-hour classes.[19]

In 2008, the not-for-profit Safer Foundation began expanding the job readiness program it developed for the Sheridan prison to other facilities. Through the new SPISE (Safer Statewide

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[16] "Rebuilding Lives. Restoring Hope. Strengthening Communities: Breaking the Cycle of Incarceration and Building Brighter Futures in Chicago." Final Report of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Reentry, January, 2006. In an August 8, 2007 interview with Michael Elliott of Roosevelt University, he estimated that the percentage of incoming inmates testing below the 6th grade level is closer to 70%.

[17] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.

[18] Harlow, Caroline Wolf. "Education and Correctional Populations." Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, January 2003.

[19] "Failing grade: the decline in educational opportunities for Illinois prison inmates." AFSCME Council 31, March 23, 2006.

Partnership to Increase Safety through Employment) Initiative, all of Illinois' correctional facilities (except the most maximum, Tamms) are being outfitted with computer labs and a job readiness curriculum that is designed to prepare inmates for reentry. Because of the newness of the SPISE program, it is too early to evaluate its contribution to correctional education programming. Some education opportunities also exist at the Adult Transitional Centers (ATCs) that IDOC operates in the communities for people who have recently left prison and are on work release.

Yet, the gap between the educational level of current prisoners and the demands of the labor market are vast, and a criminal record is a significant barrier in the pursuit of work. Some argue that through "justice reinvestment," public safety dollars should be targeted to interventions earlier in the process, focusing on education and prevention particularly in the communities that send the most people to prison.[20] However, this requires a radical shift in thinking and policy making. Until then, there needs to be continued emphasis on spending correctional dollars to ensure that, for those who do enter the criminal justice system with little or no education ability, there are ways for them to improve their educational levels.

## BENEFITS OF EDUCATION:

While the current Illinois Department of Corrections budget is over $1.4[21] billion, this money is overwhelmingly committed to confinement and security. Less than 2% is allocated to adult education.[22] Yet, an increased investment in education can pay substantial dividends in terms of crime reduction, imprisonment costs, increased tax revenues from wage and spending increases, avoided public welfare subsidies such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid, and increased child support.

**Cost Savings through Crime Reduction:** The growth in prison populations in Illinois and throughout the country resulted from changing policies that emphasize crime reduction through incapacitation by the enactment of minimum sentences, three strikes laws, and increased punishments for low-level drug offenders. While increasing incarceration does decrease crime – by most estimates by about 25%[23] – there appear to be "diminishing returns" as incarceration rates increase. In fact, educational programming has a significantly greater effect on crime reduction than incarceration: "one million dollars spent on correctional education prevents about 640 crimes, while that same money invested in incarceration alone prevents 350."[24]

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[20] Tucker, S.B. and Eric Cadora. "Ideas for an Open Society: Justice Reinvestment." Occasional Papers Series, 3 (3). Open Society Institute, November 2003.
[21] FY09 Budget: $1.414 billion total, with about $23.6 million for Education Services. Available at: http://www.state.il.us/budget/FY%202009%20Operating%20Budget%20Book%20v2.pdf
[22] Ibid
[23] King, R. S., M. Mauer and M.C. Young, M.C. *Incarceration and Crime: A Complex Relationship*. The Sentencing Project, 2005. Also, Levitt, S. D. "Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six that Do Not." *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 18* (1), Winter 2004, pp. 163-190.
[24] Bazos, Audrey and Jessica Hausman. *Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program*. UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, December 2003.

Education reduces crime primarily because it reduces recidivism rates. Recent studies have performed meta-analyses of existing research, using data from studies conducted with rigorous design. The Correctional Education Association (CEA)'s Three-State Recidivism Study found that participation in educational programming reduces recidivism by 29%. For one of the states in the study, this translated into two dollars returned for every one dollar spent on educational programming.[25] While program participation does not wholly eliminate the problem of recidivism, it suggests huge potential cost-savings in future incarceration costs. In Illinois, this same 29% reduction of recidivism rates would mean that, for every 100 inmates enrolled in educational programming at a cost of approximately $96,200, taxpayers would save roughly $271,374 in prison costs alone.[26] In other words, for every dollar spent on correctional education, three dollars would be saved in future reincarceration costs.

As education levels increase, the risk of recidivism decreases, thus it is unfortunate that postsecondary education is all but non-existent in Illinois prisons. According to reports in the late 1990s from Roosevelt University in Chicago, MacMurray College in Jacksonville, and Lewis University in Romeoville, which provided postsecondary programming in Illinois correctional institutions until funding was cut, graduates had recidivism rates of 4.5 to 12%,[27] compared to the 46% recidivism rates[28] of the general prison population during the same time period. The Illinois Department of Correction (IDOC)'s own study in 1997 showed that a postsecondary participating group recidivated at a rate of 13.1%, as compared to a well-matched control group's recidivism rate of 37.5%. Participation reduced recidivism across the board (i.e., no matter what an inmate's initial educational level was).[29] Despite the difficulty in finding a well-matched control group for many of these studies, other data suggests the same trend: "Among prisoners in 1997, 34% of those with at least some college were first-time offenders, compared to only 23% of those without a high school diploma or GED, suggesting that better educated prisoners are less likely to be repeat offenders."[30]

A report from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) takes into account more than the money saved on future incarceration costs.[31] It also looks at the dollar value of reduced

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[25] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.

[26] Number based on 2002 release data and recidivism rates. This does not include law enforcement, jail or court costs, nor net benefit to taxpayers (see footnote 33 below).

[27] Elliott, Michael, "Studies and Research on Recidivism and the Effectiveness of Prison Education," unpublished.

[28] Department of Corrections Program: Performance Indicators 1988-1994, Roosevelt University's A Program for Human Renewal, 1995.

[29] McGee, Carol. "The Positive Impact of Corrections Education on Recidivism and Employment." Illinois Department of Corrections, 1997.

[30] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.

[31] Many argue against using these studies, saying that they are skewed because of selection bias. Critics argue that the motivation of those who choose to participate in educational programming is the primary factor reducing recidivism, not the educational programming itself. This problem is less likely to affect the results Aos presents because that meta-analysis excluded studies without a control group or where the control group was not well-matched to the group of program participants. However, the question of selection bias could best be answered by a study that compared the recidivism rates of people who actually participated in educational programming to the recidivism rates of people on waiting lists for classes. Excluding places where Adult Basic Education (ABE) is required for certain groups, those on waiting lists have selected education but have not received it. If their

crime, in terms of the monetary impact on the victim. The study presents a cost-benefit analysis of several types of prison programming and concluded that providing general education to one inmate provides a net benefit to taxpayers and potential crime victims from avoided illegal activity after release of $10,699.[32]

**Cost Savings through Economic Independence:** Encouraging educational attainment reduces reliance on public assistance and increases tax revenues. Thirty percent (30%) of inmates who enter prison received public assistance prior to their arrest.[33] The more education a person receives, the more likely he or she is to become employed, and therefore the less likely he or she is to rely on public assistance.[34] People exiting prison without the skills to obtain a good job, whether they eventually return to prison or rely on public assistance for income, are simply more likely to use tax revenues than to generate them.

Prisoners start to see benefits after accessing even the most basic correctional education programs because of the high rates of illiteracy among the population entering prisons. A study of the Florida prison-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) program found that ABE participation was associated with increased probability of post-release employment, but not necessarily associated with higher post-release earnings.[35] The benefits increase as the education level increases. Those who earn GEDs while incarcerated are more likely to obtain a permanent, better paying job upon release.

Evidence of real, significant impact on economic independence, however, shows up at the postsecondary education level. Eighty-five percent (85%) of current jobs are considered "skilled," meaning they require education beyond high school.[36] At a national level, the average income of people with a bachelor's degree was 93% higher than the average income of workers with only a high school diploma.[37] These higher wages translate into higher contributions to state and federal tax revenues. In a study conducted by Roosevelt University, 486 graduates of the postsecondary program it used to run in Illinois prisons now contribute $433,263 a year in taxes. Even though not all graduates are employed, overall this represents average tax revenue of $891 per participant per year that is generated and returned to the community.

In addition, there is a lower incidence of reliance on public assistance among those with postsecondary education. Data from the Department of Education indicate that 25-34 year-olds

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recidivism rates are significantly higher than actual participants, it would eliminate the perception that selection bias is affecting the results.

[32] Aos, Steven et al. "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates." Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006

[33] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.

[34] Levin, Henry, Clive Belfield, Peter Muennig, and Cecilia Rouse. *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children.* Teachers College, Columbia University, 2007.

[35] Cho, Rosa and John H. Tyler. "Prison-based Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Post-release Labor Market Outcomes." 2008.

[36] *Crisis at the Core*. ACT Policy Report, 2004.

[37] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.

who were high school graduates were ten times more likely than a college graduates to have received income from Aid to Families with Dependent Children or public assistance income.[38]

When formerly incarcerated people can earn a decent salary, economic benefits accrue to society and other public costs are avoided when, for example, fathers can pay child support. Many fathers who are incarcerated or do not have the skills to obtain a living wage job upon release cannot afford to pay child support[39] or support their families. If they have limited education and are likely to be hired only for very low-paying jobs, having enormous child support payments hanging over their heads creates a disincentive to working at all.

**Personal and Societal Benefits:** Education can increase the self-esteem of the formerly incarcerated leading them to become more productive, positive members of society. In fact, one survey indicates that the desire to increase self-esteem is one of the most common reasons why prisoners choose to "go back to school" while incarcerated.[40] Part of the reason such programs may increase self-esteem is that they "keep autonomy alive,"[41] since class is possibly the one time of day that an inmate can make independent choices. By encouraging these independent choices to be positive ones, education also make prisoners more cognizant of their own behavior. Researchers have found that education can help increase maturity in inmates, as well as moral development. The academic improvements an inmate makes in the classroom can translate into attitudinal and behavioral changes outside of the classroom.[42] It has also been proven in many analyses that cognitive, multi-modal and skill-oriented programs, such as education, have the longest lasting and more substantial effects on recidivism rates.[43] Education can improve formerly incarcerated persons' cognitive understanding of consequences and responsibility,[44] which can translate into reduced recidivism rates.

Ultimately, says one formerly incarcerated person, when someone gets his/her GED in prison, "it may be the first successful thing they've ever done," and that success allows him or her to deal with the problems of reentry and refuse to fail or return to prison.[45]

This increased sense of success extends to the personal lives of the formerly incarcerated, making it much easier to break the cycle of incarceration that often plagues families. For one thing, the decreased probability of recidivism means that parents are more likely to be home while their kids grow up. When parents leave for extended periods of incarceration, it impedes the cognitive and emotional development of their children.[46] Repeated disruption due to

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[38] Department of Education statistics, cited in "Investment in Education: Private and Public Returns," Joint Economic Committee Study, January 2000.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Tewksbury, Richard. Assessing Correctional Education Programs: The Students' Perspective." *Journal of Correctional Education*, March 2006.
[41] Interview with Rochelle Perry, Safer Foundation, August 10, 2007
[42] MacKenzie, Doris L. "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[43] Ibid
[44] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[45] Interview with Algie Crivens, IDES, August 10, 2007.
[46] Travis, Jeremy et al. "Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry." Urban Institute, October 2003.

recidivism compounds the negative effects of a parent's absence. Conversely, education not only reduces the risk of recidivism, but it also helps formerly incarcerated persons provide for their families, which in turn increases their self-esteem[47] and strengthens the social fabric in their families and their communities.[48]

In terms of general societal benefits, increasing access to education opportunities – particularly postsecondary education – for people with criminal records can play an important role in Illinois' competitiveness in the country and the world. Illinois already faces difficulty attracting employers, with over two million working age people having no postsecondary experience and only 40% having obtained an associate's degree or higher.[49] The state is further handicapped if a significant portion of its population is barred from or limited in their ability to participate in the workforce because of a criminal record compounded by a lack of education and work history. Commitment to postsecondary programming in corrections should serve as part of a broader effort to increase educational investments to keep Illinois' economy and quality of life in line with national trends.

Education is a critical part of a systematic approach to reducing recidivism and restoring the formerly incarcerated to productive lives. To be most effective, education needs to be part of in-prison programming that also addresses employability, social skills training and other needed services such as treatment and counseling. The successes in reentry to which education is key – employment, self-sustainability, contribution to the family budget and the local economy – can be magnified if other needs, such as for drug and alcohol treatment, are also being met.[50]

## STATUS OF ILLINOIS PRISON EDUCATION:

With the costs of a growing prison population and the need to control gang networks within the system by moving prisoners regularly among facilities, the education system in Illinois prisons became both less of a priority and more difficult to manage. Beginning in the early-2000s, there has been a steady reduction in the number of educational programs in Illinois prisons. Fewer classes are offered, and fewer inmates are enrolled in programs. The decline has been across-the-board: basic education classes, GED courses, prison industries/job training programs, and postsecondary education offerings have all been cut back in Illinois, and in some cases they have been eliminated altogether.

**Current Programming:** Of its $1 billion-plus budget, the Illinois Department of Corrections designates approximately $200 million to Education Services, which presently includes adult basic education, GED classes, vocational training, and postsecondary vocational education (for

[47] Good, Joshua and Pamela Sherrid. "When the Gates Open." Public/Private Ventures, October 2005.
[48] MacKenzie, Doris L. "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[48] When lower educational levels contribute to the future academic problems of the children of the formerly incarcerated, it adds to those "long-term" problems for the nation.
[49] "Making the Pieces Fit: A Plan for Ensuring a Prosperous Illinois." Women Employed Institute and Chicago Jobs Council, February 2004.
[50] Gaes, Gerald G. "The Impact of Prison Education Programs on Post-Release Outcomes." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31 and April 1, 2008.

community college credit). Non-vocational college classes have been all but eliminated – some two-year associate degree programs remain – and prisoners can no longer pursue bachelor's degrees behind bars.

The process by which an inmate accesses education in prison appears to be a logical one, but it can be fraught with delays and interruptions that decrease the overall effectiveness of the education. Following screening and testing at Reception and Classification, incoming inmates are assigned to facilities based on their threat level (minimum, medium or maximum-security) where they are interviewed by correctional counselors who enroll them in educational, vocational and treatment programs, as appropriate. For most programs, there are waiting lists, and priority status is assigned based on length of sentence and demonstrated need. If an inmate is transferred to another facility – either due to changes in security status (up or down) or at the request of the inmate (to be closer to family and/or to access certain facility-specific programming) – they go to the bottom of the wait-list at the new facility.

If inmates test below sixth grade levels in reading and math at Reception and Classification, they are required to attend a 90-day ABE instructional program. Once they complete basic education, they can sign up for GED classes, which frequently have wait lists, and/or they can sign up for vocational training that does not require a GED. About half of the vocational programs require a GED in order to enroll, including the Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) program. Vocational offerings vary by facility.

Illinois has fewer and lower mandates on educational attainment for inmates than other states do even though research suggests that mandated students achieve just as much if not more than voluntary students. Of the 22 states that have mandatory correctional education, 10 require GED participation while the others (including Illinois) require sixth grade achievement.[51]

Because IDOC does not track people once they leave custody, little is known about the effectiveness of the educational and vocational programs in preparing formerly incarcerated people for reentry. In contrast, the Sheridan program tracks its graduates for three years post-release, which is incorporated in its annual reports to the General Assembly. In the Year 2 evaluation report for Sheridan, its graduates were found to be 21% less likely to be rearrested and 44% less likely to be reincarcerated than those in a comparison group. In addition, 56% of Sheridan graduates were employed as of December 31, 2005 compared to 44% of their comparison group counterparts.[52] There is a great deal of information that can be drawn from these reports to provide effectiveness measures, e.g., in terms of what vocational training is more likely to result in work.

Illinois must assess what types of educational programs are most needed and most effective for its prison population. This will require better tracking both within and outside of the prison. There is a national debate about whether vocational education or academic education should take

[51] Crayton, Anna and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter. "The Current State of Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008, citing "Status of mandatory education in state correctional institutions" by Jerry McGlone, U.S. Department of Education, 2002.
[52] Olson, David E., Jennifer Rapp, Mark Powers and Steve P. Karr. "Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community: Year 2." Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, May 2006.

precedence given the obviously limited resources. Vocational education seems to be gaining prominence, as correctional agencies struggle to best prepare students for reentry. Programs for academic credit are likely to be even more effective in preparing inmates for jobs than non-credit vocational work,[53] since these programs also provide certification in such fields as automotive technology, business management, cosmetology, and sanitation. At times, these certificate programs can be even more effective than purely academic education in part because of higher completion rates.[54]

While vocational programming provides job training, the formerly incarcerated will compete for jobs with a public that, in larger numbers, has completed high school and at least some college. To obtain a living wage job that provides the security and stability crucial to the success of the formerly incarcerated, going beyond basic literacy to obtain a high school diploma or GED (or higher) is a very important step in the process.[55]

Even within correctional agencies, GEDs are often a prerequisite for jobs. Out of 976 occupational training programs offered by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 96% require at least a high school diploma or a GED.[56] In Illinois, inmates must have a GED in order to work in the Illinois Correctional Industries.[57]

Increasingly, a commitment to vocational training cannot be separated from basic and secondary education. As the percentage of skilled jobs requiring more than a GED increases, new vocational training that prepares inmates for living wage jobs by incorporating in it academic skills will be even more fundamental to reducing recidivism and fighting prison overcrowding. Illinois has begun to address this issue by creating "bridge" programs as part of its educational offerings at Sheridan prison. Bridge programming, which develops basic education skills while inmates are gaining practical vocational skills, allows for both academic needs and employment needs to be met through a program that will release inmates into today's "knowledge economy"[58] with the credentials and skills to be successful. In a cost-benefit analysis of adult corrections programs, the Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) found that in-prison vocational training and general education yield some of the largest net economic benefits of adult programs.[59] One of the recommendations in the Governor's Community Safety and Reentry

[53] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[54] Ibid.
[55] The increasing prevalence of GEDs, particularly among minorities, has raised objections by James Heckman and colleagues that they do not provide true equivalency of a high school diploma because the GED program does not develop noncognitive skills such as perseverance and motivation that are essential to academic and economic success. Heckman's investigation into the outcomes of individuals who earn a GED found that they are not more economically successful than high school dropouts.
[56] *Occupational Training Programs Directory: Life Skills for Work*. Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons, Education Branch, September 2006.
[57] <http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/industries/default.shtml> August 20, 2007.
[58] "Bridges to Careers for Low-Skilled Adults: A Program Development Guide." Women Employed Institute, 2005.
[59] Aos, Steve, Marna Miller and Elizabeth Drake. "Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not." Washington State Institute of Public Policy, January 2006.

Commission report is to expand the bridge model and build it into as many vocational classes as possible.[60]

**Status of Educational Outcomes:** Since 2001, Illinois' prison educational system has lost 160 employees.[61] Based on IDOC data, this includes a loss of 104 teachers at correctional facilities, more than 25 of whom taught GED classes. This steady decrease, depicted in figure 1, has an effect on the ability to provide quality education to those in need. As the number of educators decreases, the number of people on waiting lists for ABE classes increases, in general (figure 2).

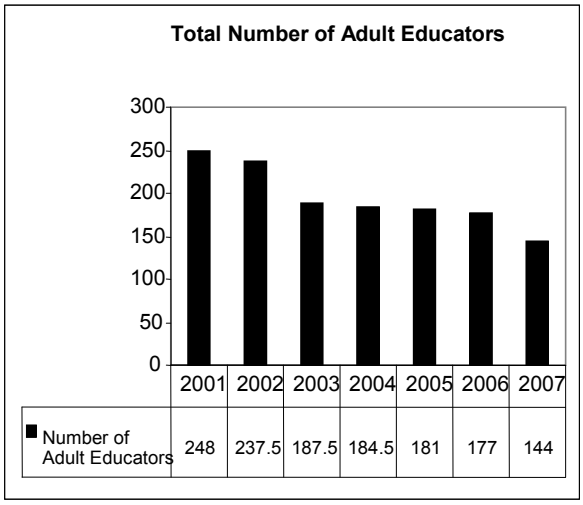


**Figure 1**

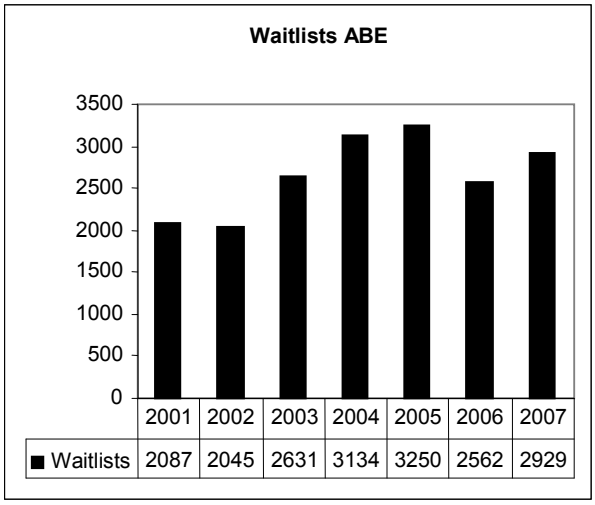


**Figure 2**

For the teachers that continue to work for IDOC, the situation is increasingly difficult. According to AFSCME, educators are now required to teach three classes, with shorter class times.[62] Recent department budgets, including the FY10 budget, have included increases in the number of positions in Education Services[63]; however, there continue to be a crippling number of vacancies due to administrative delays in being able to post and fill the jobs.

Shorter class times and strained educators negatively affect the quality of the programming; yet, in spite of these accommodations, the waiting lists have continued to increase. While a number of students are still being served, every student on the waiting list represents a lost chance to further encourage successful reentry, to decrease incarceration costs, and to strengthen communities. Additionally, the more individuals who return to IDOC, the more likely it is that Illinois will have to spend revenue in the future on increased security in overcrowded facilities and/or opening another prison, not to mention the costs to crime victims.

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[60] "Inside Out: A Plan to Reduce Recidivism and Improve Public Safety." Report from the Community Safety and Reentry Commission, May 2008.
[61] Huh, Jan. "Fewer inmates finish GED requirements, report says." *State Journal-Register*, March 24, 2006.
[62] "Failing grade: the decline in educational opportunities for Illinois prison inmates." AFSCME Council 31, March 23, 2006.
[63] http://www.state.il.us/budget/FY2010/FY2010_Operating_Budget.pdf. Accessed 4/1/09.

Illinois' departmental directives limit the number of people in ABE and GED classes for safety reasons.[64] Staffing shortages in security and teaching have compounded the difficulty of providing classroom instruction in a secure setting. To increase educational opportunities, the Governor's Community Safety and Reentry Commission in its final report recommended exploring distance learning opportunities for prisoners in conjunction with community colleges by incorporating teleconferencing and high-speed internet in prison classrooms.[65]

Recent Illinois state legislation has encouraged correctional education. However, while one 2006 law mandates that the IDOC increase enrollment in GED programs by 100% over the coming years, [66] it does not require that the number of GED certificates awarded increase. It appears that this legislation has had some positive impact, as previously declining numbers of GED certificates awarded have started increasing since the law was passed, with a slight drop-off in 2007 (figure 3).

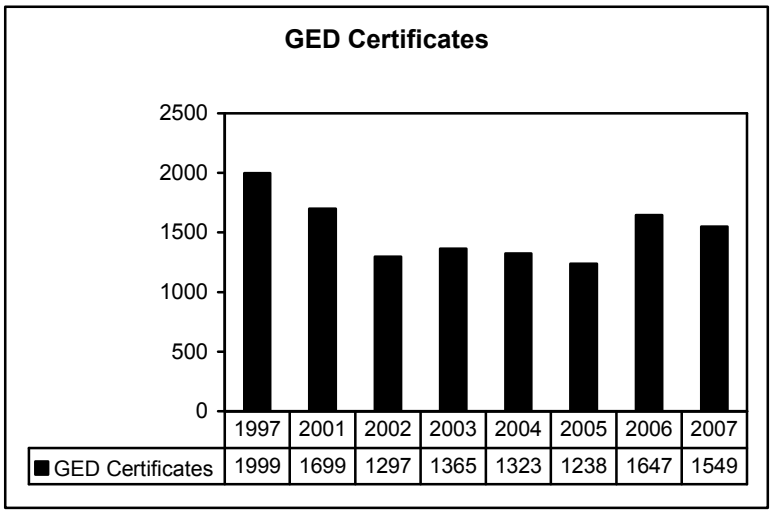


**Figure 3**

Further efforts should encourage a higher capacity for GED classes, especially considering the long waiting lists for the program and, at the same time, the extremely high pass rates (approximately 80%) of inmates taking the exam.

At the postsecondary level, however, Illinois has seen drastic reductions in its offerings to prisoners over the past decade. Faced with a lack of public support and the fear of appearing "soft on crime," Congress eliminated federal Pell Grants for prisoners for postsecondary education as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.[67] In the first

[64] Interview with Cherry Brewer, Administrator of Adult Educational and Vocational Services Department of Corrections, August 6, 2007.
[65] "Inside Out: A Plan to Reduce Recidivism and Improve Public Safety." Report from the Community Safety and Reentry Commission, May 2008.
[66] <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/94/094-0744.htm> accessed August 20, 2007.
[67] In 1998 Congress reauthorized the Higher Education Act, prohibiting first-time drug offenders from receiving federal student aid until one year after conviction, second-time drug offenders from receiving aid until two years after conviction, and prohibiting third-time drug offenders from receiving Federal student aid altogether. (Tyler, Walsch, and Dusenberry 2006)

year after prisoners became ineligible for Pell Grants, participation in prison postsecondary education programs dropped 44%.[68] While nationally the percentage of prisoners currently participating in postsecondary education programs has stabilized around 5% – a rate similar to pre-1994 levels[69] – the choice of programs has narrowed considerably and is almost exclusively focused on vocational training. In Illinois, the number of associate's degrees awarded has declined (figure 5) and bachelor's degree programs have become non-existent (figure 4).

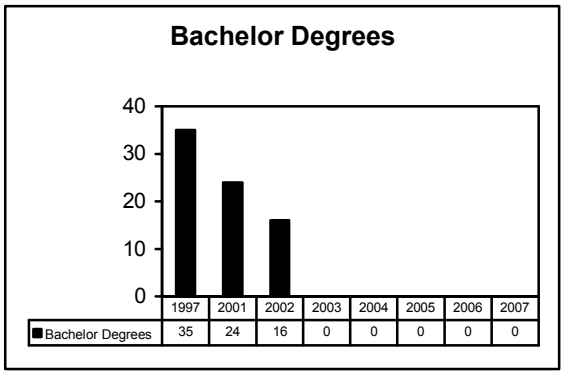


**Figure 4**

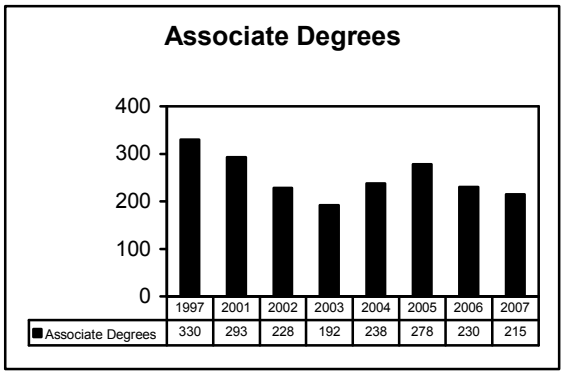


**Figure 5**

However, slightly more promising are the general increases in college vocational certificates (figure 6). To measure what this means in terms of educational outcomes, it would be helpful to have research to demonstrate how these certificates prepare inmates for jobs, and how they can be effectively used on resumes and in job interviews. As a general matter, there appears to be little data collected by IDOC or other agencies on the effectiveness of educational programs.[70]

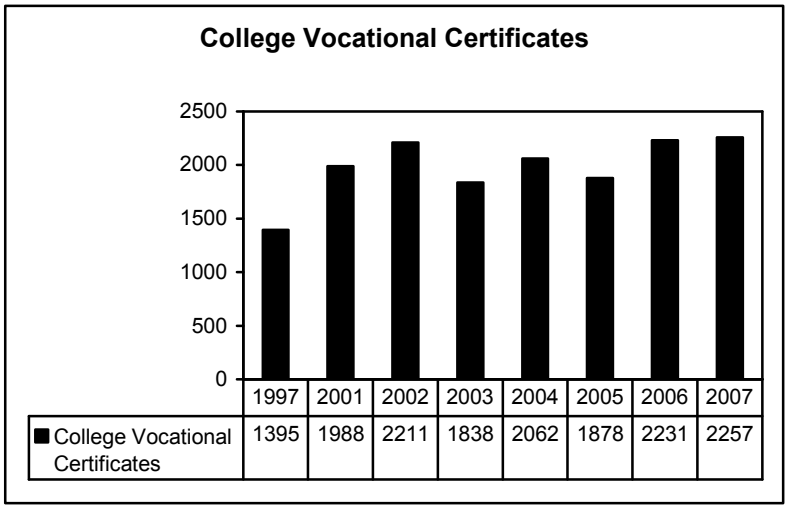


**Figure 6**

[68] Crayton, Anna and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter. "The Current State of Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[69] MacKenzie, Doris L. "Structure and Components of Successful Educational Programs." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1 2008.
[70] An exception to this used to be the Illinois Correctional Industries Program's annual report which indicated the cost-benefit savings derived from the work and education.

## OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Despite all the proven benefits, participation in educational programming in prisons declined at the national level from 42% to 35% during the 1990s.[71] This trend has continued in recent years. A Bureau of Justice Statistics study showed lower participation rates in correctional education programs in state facilities from 1997 to 2004 that were across-the-board: basic education went from 5.3% to 3.1%, GED/high school dropped from 23.4% to 19.2%, and college courses went from 9.9% to 7.3%. Even vocational course saw rates decline from 32.2% to 27.0%. Postsecondary correctional education is still available to only about 5% of prisoners, and degree completion rates are low.[72] Attempts to revitalize correctional education face significant obstacles from the public, from the system, and of course, because of money.

**Funding:** The largest obstacle is funding. As the prison population has grown, educational funding has not kept pace.[73] Moreover, some funding mechanisms have been altered or completely eliminated. Funding declines have been at both the federal and the state level, but the reasons for the declines vary: at the federal level, cuts were primarily motivated by the increased emphasis on "tough on crime" policies; at the state level, cuts generally have been due to budget shortfalls.[74]

In Illinois, funding for correctional education comes from the state General Revenue Fund, the Illinois Community College Board, and federal sources.[75] General Revenue Fund appropriations for the prison School District have not kept pace with the rising numbers of inmates eligible for educational programs. The disinvestment is most obvious when looked at in a per capita sense based on the number of people served by the programs.

A sharp decline in federal funding for postsecondary education is largely responsible for the decrease in college-level courses offered. In the past, Illinois prisoners used to be eligible to receive grant money through the Monetary Award Program (MAP), which provided another funding stream. MAP funding has declined in recent years,[76] and in 1990, prisoners became ineligible to receive funding under this program.[77] Financial aid for prison education has also declined at the federal level, primarily because of a 1994 law removing prisoners' eligibility for Pell Grants.

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[71] Lawrence, Sarah et al. "The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming." Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, May 2002.
[72] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[73] Lawrence, Sarah et al. "The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming." Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, May 2002.
[74] Crayton, Anna and Suzanne Rebecca Neusteter. "The Current State of Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[75] Interview with Michael Elliott, Roosevelt University, August 8, 2007.
[76] "Making the Pieces Fit: A Plan for Ensuring a Prosperous Illinois." Women Employed Institute and Chicago Jobs Council, February 2004.
[77] Elliott, Michael, "Studies and Research on Recidivism and the Effectiveness of Prison Education," unpublished.

When prisoners were eligible to receive Pell Grant funding, these funds were used to build classrooms, pay teachers, and provide courses. With these funds, the number of correctional postsecondary programs in the country grew from eight in 1980 to 350 in 1990.[78] However, the United States government did away with this funding mechanism in 1994. In the year that followed, program participation dropped by 40%.[79] After a sharp decrease in the number of postsecondary programs in the late 1990's, enrollment is actually starting to increase again. Five percent (5%) of prisoners nationwide have participated in postsecondary programs, roughly equivalent to the percentage that participated when Pell Grants were available, yet an overwhelming majority of these prisoners come from large prison systems that are better able to leverage state funding.[80]

Some federal programs have partially replaced Pell Grant funding, but with limited impact in terms of reinstituting non-vocational postsecondary courses. The most common source of federal funding for postsecondary programs is the Incarcerated Youth Offenders program, but these grants can only be used for people who are 25 or younger and already have their high school diploma or GED.[81]

Because of their focus on serving disadvantaged populations, their relative low cost and their flexibility in designing courses that reflect labor market demands, community colleges have become the primary partners with prisons to provide postsecondary education. Across the country, 68% of postsecondary providers in correctional institutions are community colleges;[82] in Illinois, community colleges are the only postsecondary education providers. While they present the most cost-effective approach, these partnerships have also been strained by funding cuts, and programming has decreased.

Funding is not only a problem for postsecondary programming; shortages affect even basic literacy and job training programs. The National Literacy Act of 1991 created the Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners Program, which administered grants to state agencies to "create and improve literacy programs in correctional institutions."[83] These grants were used for job training programs, academic programs, and even programs that addressed family and financial skills.[84] However, after the 2006 fiscal year, the program is no longer being funded.

Just as the removal of Pell Grant eligibility affected broad federal funding for postsecondary programs, statutory changes have affected federal funding for adult basic education and vocational training. Correctional education previously received substantial funding under the Adult Education Act, which mandated that a minimum of 10% of federal ABE funds go to

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[83] "Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners Program." U.S. Department of Education, October 13, 2006. <http://www.ed.gov> Accessed August 7, 2007.
[84] "2006 Awards: Life Skills for State and Local Prisoners Program." <http://www.ed.gov/programs/lifeskills/2006awards.html>. Accessed August 3, 2007

correctional institutions, and the Vocational Education Act mandated that a minimum of 1% fund vocational programs for prisoners. Now, under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), a *maximum* 10% of ABE funds can go to correctional facilities. Similarly, under the revised Vocational Education Act, no more than 1% of funding can go to programs for prisoners.[85]

This is more than simply a decrease in funding. It represents a significant step away from previous commitment to correctional education, since under the newer laws, states are no longer required to commit *any* of the federal funding to correctional education. Within the current system, there is a great deal of variation in how WIA funds are being used. In New York, 2006-2008 WIA funds will provide $2,698,920 for corrections education below the postsecondary level.[86] In Illinois, there is no allocation for prisoners with WIA funds.

**Implementation:** There are pervasive problems in implementing education at correctional facilities. One problem is that inmates have physical and psychological difficulties and differences when it comes to learning. Inmates also suffer from mental health and substance abuse problems, but educators are not certified in special education.[87]

The Supreme Court ruled in 1998 (*Pennsylvania v. Yesky* [118 S. Ct 1952]) that the American Disabilities Act Title II applies to individuals in correctional facilities. This mandates that inmates with disabilities be provided with adequate educational services while incarcerated. Compared to the 6% living with a learning disability in the general population, estimates range from 17% to 50% of those in the adult prison population with some kind of learning disability or difference.[88] [89]. Yet funding in some states hardly covers the cost of education for those without disabilities, let alone can be stretched to cover higher-need populations. And other states which do cover disabled individuals have trouble providing consistent services over time because funding can be variable.[90]

At a procedural level, long waiting lists and high rates of transfer complicate the educational process. Prison overcrowding and strategies to control gang activity contribute to the high transfer rate[91] and the difficulty of providing programs to the large number of incoming inmates with low TABE scores. Personal anecdotes indicate that prisoners are often transferred between facilities before completing a course, only to be put on the bottom of their new location's course

[85] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.
[86] "Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services Programs, 2006-2008." New York State Education Department. <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/funding/adultedliteracy0608.htm>. Accessed July 15, 2007
[87] Lawrence, Sarah et al. "The Practice and Promise of Prison Programming." Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, May 2002.
[88] Greenberg, Dunleavy & Kutner 2007
[89] Corley, M.A. "Correctional education programs for adults with learning disabilities." Linkages 3, 2. National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, 1996.
[90] Leone, Peter E., Wilson, Michel, Krezmien, Michael P. "Understanding and Responding to the Education Needs of Special Populations in Adult Corrections" Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008
[91] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.

wait-list.[92] Frequent transfers are a problem because the waiting lists and programs are not coordinated among the state's institutions, and student records are not transferred.

Even stationary inmates must spend a substantial amount of time waiting for a spot to open up in a class. Priority is given to offenders serving terms long enough to complete either educational or vocational programs. Offenders are increasingly serving shorter terms, as the number of drug offenders has increased. In FY2008, the average length of stay for prisoners in Illinois was 1.2 years. Nearly 6,000 prisoners in 2008 stayed 63 days or less.[93] By the time prisoners are processed, tested, and move up the waiting list for courses, many of them do not have enough time left in their sentence to complete the program they had been waiting for.

**Misperception of Public Opinion:** An impediment for increased support for educational programming in the past has been concern about public opinion. For years, elected officials have shied away from rehabilitation programs, believing these programs are not acceptable to the voters. But the public view is changing. According to Gabrielle de la Gueronniere of the Legal Action Center, the public is increasingly receptive to the idea of a "second chance" and the concept of redemption for prisoners.[94] Public opinion polls confirm this: 87% of U.S. citizens favor rehabilitation above punishment only, and 82% think job training is a very important.[95] In order for advocates to successfully increase funding for programming, elected officials must be aware that the public supports smart strategies to reduce crime and incarceration.

The public does understand the trade-offs involved. Understandably, when people feel that correctional programs could detract from funding for their own children's education, they are less supportive. However, with the ever-increasing amount that is spent on corrections,[96] programs that reduce recidivism mean that more revenue will be available in the future to support education for the entire population. Even when prisoners were eligible for Pell Grants, they made up a tiny fraction of grant recipients, despite the profound positive effect the grants had on correctional education. In 1993, less than one-tenth of 1% of the $5.3 billion dollars of Pell Grant awards went to inmates.[97]

The public has moved beyond the idea that these programs are a bonus given to people convicted of crimes, as opposed to what they are: a necessary step in rehabilitation. People support rehabilitation when they are aware that "90% of inmates leave prison within ten years and will therefore soon be their neighbors.[98]" The less likely a prisoner in downstate prison is to recidivate, the less likely people are to experience crime in their own community.

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[92] Interview with William Moore, Safer Foundation, August 10, 2007
[93] Information provided upon request by IDOC, February 20, 2009.
[94] Interview with Gabrielle de la Gueronniere, Legal Action Center, August 3, 2007
[95] Krisberg, Barry "Attitudes of US Voters toward Prisoner Rehabilitation and Reentry policies" *National Council on Crime and Delinquency FOCUS*, April 2006.
[96] Stemen, Don. "Reconsidering Incarceration: New Directions for Reducing Crime." Vera Institute, January 2007.
[97] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[98] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.

Fiscal pressures in the correctional system pose trade-offs, as described in the Justice Policy Institute's report on "Cellblocks or classrooms?"[99] However, it does not have to be one or the other. For investment in education to be as effective as possible, it should include a population in such clear need of it. In the words of John Castro, former superintendent of IDOC's school district, "It is interesting that the benefits of education are recognized and encouraged for all of our society except, perhaps, those who need it the most, the incarcerated."[100]

## BEST PRACTICES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Funding is central to support sound educational programming. States have begun to assess the educational needs of their prison populations and design effective programs. There are a series of ways that the issue has been addressed, from mandating prisoner-to-teacher ratios to inventing creative ways to derive necessary funds. For example North Carolina developed several sources of funding for their prison education programs that include tuition waivers (which are possible due to high levels of state funding for full-time enrolled students), education welfare funds, and start-up funds.[101] Education welfare funds are created from simple collections made in prison canteens, or from the money collected from prison payphones. Through these funding mechanisms North Carolina is able to provide postsecondary education programs to over a third of its inmate population.

In order to ensure that ABE and GED programs are well-staffed, some other states are imposing strict guidelines about the number of teachers that must be hired. Michigan's Department of Corrections laid out such requirements in its 2002 Education Plan. After calculating the student capacity of each facility, defined as the number of prisoners in need of a GED or Career and Technical Certificate, Michigan states that there will be one teacher for every 60 prisoners in need of academic instruction, as well as one teacher for every 30 students in need of career and technical instruction.[102]

To overcome the issue of wait-listing prisoners and then transferring them before they have completed classes, for postsecondary students, at least, Ohio law requires students to complete courses before they can transfer.[103]

Several states – such as Ohio, New Mexico, Wisconsin and Iowa – are implementing ways to more effectively use technology in correctional education, including the use of closed circuit

[99] "Cell Blocks or Classrooms?: The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African American Men." Justice Policy Institute, August 2002.
[100] John Castro, Superintendent, School District 428, FY '97 Annual Report. Printed by authority of the state of Illinois, January 1998.
[101] Contardo, Jeanne and Michelle Tolbert. "Prison Postsecondary Education: Bridging Learning from Incarceration to the Community." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[102] *Education Action Plan-Phase II*. Michigan Department of Corrections, January 2002.
[103] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.

television, intranet, CDs/DVDs, two-way audio/video conferencing, internet protocol TV, satellite, and learning content systems such as NovaNet, WebCT, or Blackboard.[104]

Other states are implementing policies to increase the quality of correctional education. In New York, the *Bridges to Practice* program through the National Institute for Literacy has been used to provide additional training for teachers in the correctional setting to address the psychological and emotional needs of prisoners, as well as learning disabilities.[105] The program design is based on the premise that education is best designed as part of a broader set of programs[106], which meet the wide range of needs experienced by offenders.

Some states require community college administrators to report their effectiveness in prison education. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board now requires community colleges to address the number of prisoners served when they submit yearly reports.[107] (According to representatives from the Illinois Community College Board, this is not a legislative requirement in Illinois, but information is collected.[108] If that information is not reviewed and used to assess the effectiveness of the work, no one is held accountable.)

The National H.I.R.E Network is advocating for the re-instatement of Pell Grants within the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.[109] While this re-instatement would certainly help, state funding is an equally necessary component. According to the Institute for Higher Education Policy, state funding acts as a "proxy" of state support[110]; it is the best indicator of how strong the state's commitment to correctional education is. Many states have managed to overcome the removal of Pell Grant eligibility. At the Lansing Correctional Facility in Kansas, a private industry that operates factories in the prison offers a business skills program to its inmate employees. The program is funded in equal parts by the private industry, the prisoners themselves, and Donnelly College.[111] One of the reasons this can be successful is that the "prisoner-students" are paid minimum wage, as opposed to the pennies-on-the-hour that they make in other states. Oklahoma, despite a loss of state funding, has actually increased its federal funding using a rigorous evaluation process and an "empirical database" to strengthen its applications for funding.[112] Both of these strategies are relatively low-cost and ultimately leverage outside funds to improve the state system.

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[104] Borden, Cindy and Penny Richardson. "The Effective Use of Technology in Correctional Education." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[105] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.
[106] "Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates." Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Brian Durham, ICCB.
[109] Interview with Gabrielle de la Gueronniere, Legal Action Center, August 3, 2007
[110] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[111] Taylor, Jon Marc. "Alternative Funding Options for Post-Secondary Correctional Education (Part One)" *Journal of Correctional Education*, March 2005.
[112] Spangenberg, Gail. "Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation & Discussion." Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, February 2004.

Nationwide, advocates and correctional agencies are coming up with other innovative strategies to fund postsecondary educational programming. Some of their ideas are as follows:

- In the past, Minnesota has used the commissions from prisoners' collect calls to help fund postsecondary education at one of its facilities.[113]
- Minnesota has also established a private, not-for-profit foundation to raise funds for associate's degree programs in the state's correctional facilities.[114]
- States such as California, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington maximize partnerships with community colleges to utilize distance learning opportunities; access state and federal student financial aid and private scholarships; and set up inmate payment plans that are workable.[115]
- Some advocates argue that prisoners should be allowed to participate in AmeriCorps, and do community service in return for an educational grant.[116] While innovative, this strategy would likely suffer from one of the most common educational obstacles in prisons: the shorter prison stay. Most AmeriCorps programs last longer than the average prisoner is incarcerated.[117] However, this could be an effective strategy for education for people with longer sentences, who are typically at the bottom of the waitlist because of their more distant release date.
- In light of the fact that 150,000 veterans are incarcerated across the country, many prisoners in need of education could be eligible for funding under the G.I. Bill or the Veterans Educational Assistance Program.[118]

In conjunction with Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, the Illinois Department of Employment Security and the Federal Department of Labor, IDOC operates the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP), including educational classes, employment workshops and counseling and linkage to other benefits and programs, such as health services, housing arrangements and obtaining I.D. cards. In the 2008 program year, more than 1,700 incarcerated veterans attended IVTP workshops.

In order to prevent the same prisoners from returning to prison, still without having obtained basic education and skills, community-based programs can provide a continuum of care. While no states appear to be doing this on a broad scale, some demonstration programs show promise. The Safer Foundation's pilot sites in the Ready4Work (R4W) Initiative provide educational opportunities, including ABE, GED, and work training classes, after offenders are released.[119] Though course completion is difficult to balance with the other challenges of reentry, it is difficult to know how many formerly incarcerated persons would take advantage of the opportunity, since it is rarely made readily available. The promising results from the

[113] Taylor, Jon Marc. "Alternative Funding Options for Post-Secondary Correctional Education (Part Two)" *Journal of Correctional Education*, September 2005.
[114] Erisman, Wendy and Jeanne Bayer Contoardo. "Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-state analysis of postsecondary correctional education policy." The Institute for Higher Education Policy, November 2005.
[115] Contardo, Jeanne and Michelle Tolbert. "Prison Postsecondary Education: Bridging Learning from Incarceration to the Community." Presented at the Reentry Roundtable on Education, March 31-April 1, 2008.
[116] Ibid.
[117] "AmeriCorps." <http://www.americorps.org/about/ac/index.asp>. Accessed August 24, 2007.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Jucovy, Linda. "Just Out: Early Lessons for the Ready4Work Prisoner Reentry Initiative." Public/Private Ventures, February 2006.

Ready4Work (R4W) Initiative – national data shows that R4W recidivism rates at six months and one year after release are about half of the national reincarceration rates[120] – help build the case for expanded community-based educational programs, particularly to serve the parolees in pursuit of GEDs with the new Illinois incentives. Community-based programming is crucial to serving the formerly incarcerated population that did not have the time or the chance to receive education while in prison.

**Recommendations:**

Investment in education for prisoners can save tax dollars later in terms of

- Decreased crime, with the concomitant reduced cost of law enforcement and judicial processing,
- Reduced financial and personal toll on crime victims, which may require public dollars to remediate,
- Lower public costs of supporting non-working families or those with children eligible for child support.

In fact, formerly incarcerated persons who are educated and employed can add to the economy and public budgets by paying taxes and increased spending.

Illinois can achieve these tax savings and create safer and more economically viable communities by addressing prison education. The following recommendations are offered to policy makers:

- Illinois should do a full assessment of the educational needs of its prison population and also determine how to meet those needs in order to reduce recidivism and crime
- Illinois should analyze national models of effective educational programs, including prison industries and programs which bridge from prison to jobs in the community and design a new educational system in state prisons, patterned on the most effective programs that fit the needs of the prison population
- Based on the assessment and current practices, Illinois should establish a teacher-to-inmate ratio for prisons and hire qualified teachers to meet that ratio
- Based on the assessment of current learning levels and disabilities of Illinois inmates, teachers should be hired and trained to meet those needs
- Illinois should reexamine how educational programs are implemented to maximize their use and effectiveness. This should include:
    - Begin educational planning and activity immediately for all entering inmates
    - Reduce waiting lists
    - Expand available educational resources/opportunities in all facilities, including through increased classroom technology and distance learning opportunities
    - Expand "bridge" programs that combine academic and vocational training
    - Coordinate prisoner movement among prisons with educational programming
    - Transfer records with prisoners

[120] "Ready4Work In Brief: Update on Outcomes; Reentry May Be Critical for States, Cities." Public/Private Ventures *In Brief*, Issue 6, May 2007.

    - Mandate that programs such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) to be repeated until passed, rather than having a time-limited window by which time a prisoner must pass
    - Prohibit inmates from being transferred until they have completed classes in which they are enrolled.
- Illinois should explore increasing the level of education mandated for prisoners from the current sixth-grade level in order to better prepare inmates for the job market
- All higher educational entities in the state should be responsible for contributing to education in prisons
- Illinois must develop a plan to maximize federal and state money to support expanded sound educational programming
- Maximally allowed federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars should be allocated to prison education
- All educational programs provided for prisoners should be evaluated annually (on positive outcomes achieved as well as negative outcomes avoided), and the Department of Corrections with the other educational entities should report annually to the General Assembly and the Governor (or the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council if it is created) on the effectiveness of the programs and the cost-benefit analysis in tax dollars and crime reduction.

For the incarcerated population, no less than for the general population, education is one of the wisest investments the government can make in a state's future. When inmates receive educational opportunities in prison, they are better equipped to function in society once they leave. Currently, many of the same inmates are recycled through the criminal justice system again and again for short periods of time, at great expense to taxpayers. Education can break the cycle and ensure that the more than 90% of offenders who eventually return to life outside prison add something positive to their families and their communities. Creative strategies to increase funding and overcome the other assorted obstacles of correctional education are not simply laudable because they provide a good service. They are necessary to building a system that rehabilitates offenders, permitting them to live well and productively.

## Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

- Adult Basic Education (ABE): Basic skills training in arithmetic, reading, writing, and English as a Second Language (ESL).
- Adult Secondary Education: Instruction for the GED tests or another certificate of high school equivalency.
- Vocational Education: Training to prepare individuals for general positions of employment as well as skills for specific jobs and/or industries.
- College Coursework: Advanced instruction that allows individuals to earn college credit which may be applied toward an Associate, Bachelor or Master degree.
- Special Education: Education training designed for individuals who have learning differences.
- Study Release: Release of prisoners for participation in coursework or training offered outside of the prison or jail.
- Life Skills/Competency-Based Education: Wide variety of programs that focus on providing individuals with communication skills, job and financial skills development, education, interpersonal and family relationship development, as well as stress and anger management (U.S. Department of Education 2006, p. 10).

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