



Bill Muth, Ph.D.

Correctional Education: Slow Change in a Fast World

by BILL MUTH, PH.D.

Sometimes change comes fast — like when a new baby comes into your life, or you experience a sudden religious conversion. But some changes happen slowly. For example, John Comings, who heads up the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy at Harvard, reported that for two thirds of the adults in U.S. literacy programs, it takes about 150 hours of quality instruction to gain one year in reading proficiency.

Wow. That seems like a lot of work for such a little gain. But is it so little? I recently spent four weeks studying literacy learners who were incarcerated in federal prisons. Two groups of basic readers were reading below the second grade level. The two groups performed almost identically on most of the eleven reading tests we administered. But one group could recognize words at the 1.6 grade level (the equivalent of being about 6 months into the second grade), and the other was struggling with words on the

.6 grade level — one year behind the first group. While all five of the lower-scoring inmates reported they never read outside of the classroom, seven of the nine inmates in the higher-scoring group did

“One study found the average cost of a vocational training program per inmate was \$1,960, but the net savings to taxpayers and the community ... was more than \$12,000.”

read as much as six or more hours per week during their free time, even if they struggled to understand what they read.

A small life skill difference, but a potent one. The more you read, the more you reinforce the learning that happens in the classroom, and the easier it is to

Correctional Education

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learn more.

These almost imperceptible changes are going on around us continuously. But in our day-to-day rush, these changes are almost always under the radar. And that is truly a disservice to our adult literacy teachers and the learners in their classrooms.

Did you know that incarcerated learners who studied for the GED through programs offered by the Virginia Department of Correctional Education had over a 75% passing rate, far above the national average? Or that in recent years, approximately one of every 100 adults in North America who received a GED was a federal prisoner?

Did you know that recent, credible studies have found:

- Inmates who worked in prison industry programs were 24% less likely to recidivate.
- Those who participated in vocational and apprenticeship programs were 33% less likely to recidivate.

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PROGRESS

Progress is published by:
Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center
Virginia Commonwealth University
817 West Franklin Street
P.O. Box 842037
Richmond, VA 23284-2037
www.valrc.org

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Subscriptions are free to Virginia residents. To subscribe, contact the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at:
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(804) 828-6521 or
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We reserve the right to decline publication.

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This product was paid for under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department should be inferred.



A Few Words on *Progress*

A 30% drop in recidivism nationally “could mean the difference in the lives of 112,500 inmates, their families, and communities—in one year alone!” So states Dr. William R. Muth in this issue’s lead article. The statistics he cites show the positive impact of vocational and educational programs conducted in correctional institutions and offer persuasive reasons why the general public should be more supportive of these programs than it has been historically. From time to time, we hear stories of individual inmates who have overcome immense odds to become published writers, ordained ministers, or performers. Less often, we consider the large numbers of incarcerated adults who earn GEDs or find vocations and then go on to lead productive lives beyond prison. Yet those quiet, often slow to develop, achievements occur every day in jails and prisons across the country, thanks to dedicated adult educators and volunteer tutors in correctional education. In this issue of *Progress*, we look at educational programs in our prisons and jails and meet some of the managers, teachers, volunteers, and students who work and learn in those programs.

An interview with Judy Philpott, Senior Assistant Superintendent for Adult Programs at the Virginia Department of Correctional Education (DCE) outlines the establishment in 1974 of the Rehabilitative School Authority, the forerunner of today’s agency. One of the adult programs, Plaza Comunitaria, recently won the Cultural Enhancement Award from the National Association of Hispanics in Criminal Justice. An article by Jesus Gracia, an inmate tutor in the program, gives an overview of Plaza Comunitaria and its benefits to inmates. Another article introduces Zarco, a student who has not only developed stronger literacy skills, but has shown significant intellectual and emotional growth as well.

Educational programs in local and regional jails are often run by adult education or community-based literacy organizations, and, while they exhibit many commonalities, they are often as diverse in structure and instruction as the facilities where they are located. In two articles, we highlight the Newport News and Roanoke programs and provide a survey of such programs conducted by community-based literacy organizations across the state.

For those of us who do not work in correctional education, this issue of *Progress* can provide a better understanding of what it takes to establish and maintain successful programs in jails and prisons. Further, I hope our colleagues who do work or volunteer in those programs will find some new ideas to try or that they will, at minimum, simply be encouraged by our recognition of the important work they do.

Sincerely,



Calendar

November 2-3

LESLLA 2006
Richmond, VA
See page 14 for details.
www.leslla.org

5-10

AAACE
Milwaukee, WI
www.aaace.org

December

23 - January 1

VALRC Closed

January

29-February 16

VALRC Online Courses
Open Registration

February

19 - April 15

VALRC Online Courses

- ESOL Basics
- Adults as Learners
- Using Technology to Enhance GED Instruction

March

25-28

COABE
Philadelphia, PA

CLICK:

ONLINE DEGREES

by THOM GEHRING

A new degree is starting in Fall 2006, at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The campus is surrounded by mountains and parkland on three sides and located centrally between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. The CSU system is noted for its reasonable tuition and academic rigor. CSUSB hosts the Center for the Study of Correctional Education.

Twenty-five years ago, the Correctional Education Association (CEA) estimated that there were 20,000 correctional educators at prisons and juvenile facilities in the U.S.; current estimates suggest there are approximately 30,000. No state has a licensure for correctional educators. There have only been two definitive books on correctional education theory and practice. Most of the best literature on the field is long out of print and inaccessible to field-based teachers. California research indicates that:

- only about 8% of correctional educators know the names of the great contributors to the field or the titles of their books;
- most correctional educators do not know there is a literature on correctional education;
- only about 60% know the CEA exists and;
- only about 10% of correctional educators are members of the CEA.

These conditions, combined with the situation that most institutional education programs are managed by jailers rather than educators, make correctional educators vulnerable to intense institutional pressures, condemned to reinvent the wheel whenever they encounter a problem. The professional status of this important field needs attention.

CSUSB's Center has earned a reputation for academic excellence. It has the only comprehensive library on correctional and alternative education, the only

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MA Degree—48 (600 Level) Quarter Units (Courses Also Offered at 500 Level Toward BA)

EDUC Core Courses (for all educators in the MA programs, regardless of setting; 12 units)

1. EDUC 603 Effective Communication in Education
2. EDUC 605 Foundations of Education
3. EDUC 607 Introduction to Educational Research

Education—Correctional and Alternative (EDCA) Program Core (16 units)

1. EDCA 614 Foundations of Institutional Education: History and Literature
- *2. EDCA 616 Teaching the Institutional Student
- *3. EDCA 618 Social and Cultural Dynamics of Institutional Education (Fundamentals)
4. EDCA 620 Educational Change in Institutional Settings

Culminating Experience (8 units)

Track A: Master's Thesis

1. EDUC 600 Master's Thesis or Project (4 units)
2. Four units of Electives chosen from the list below (4 units each):
EDCA 628 Special Education in Correctional Institutions
EDCA 630 Alternative and Correctional Education
EDCA 632 Career and Vocational Education in Correctional Education
EDCA 634 Correctional Education Leadership
EDCA 636 Pedagogy and Andragogy (Adult Education) in Correctional Institutions
EDCA 638 The Organization of Correctional and Alternative Education Service Delivery
EDCA 640 Literacy Instruction in Adult Confinement Institutions
EDCA 643 Library Services for Alternative and Correctional Students
EDCA 644 Pre- and Post-Release Transitions for Correctional Students
EDCA 646 Comparative Correctional Education
EDCA 684 Special Topics in Correctional and Alternative Education.

Track B: Comprehensive Examination

1. EDUC 999 Comprehensive Examination (0 units)
2. Eight units of Electives chosen from the list above.

Area of Specialization, selected from a related field of education, in consultation with advisor. (12 units)

48 TOTAL quarter units for completion

*Note: These online courses are in the CEA Highly Qualified Correctional Teacher contract.

Providing Literacy Instruction to Inmates: A Variety of Approaches

by VICTOIRE GERKENS SANBORN

“It is widely known that people serving time in correctional facilities who do not meet the 12th grade educational benchmark standards are more vulnerable to recidivism and re-arrest than those who do achieve these standards. The overwhelming majority of inmates currently incarcerated are from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. “Observing Knowledge Building Practices in the Corrections Environment,” Paula Welling, Sandy Johnson, & Tamecia Jones, 2003.

A number of Virginia’s community-based literacy organizations provide a variety of direct and indirect literacy services to their local jails. Volunteer literacy instruction empowers inmates in more than just the obvious ways. Tutors can serve as a link to the real world, connecting inmates to family and friends through letters. They can help them fill out request forms, or act as mentors to parolees who are transitioning back into the community.

Tutoring an incarcerated individual can be daunting. Stringent checkpoints, less than ideal classroom environments, and lack of privacy can discourage even the most dedicated volunteer. Karen Hearn, director of the Pittsylvania Literacy Program writes, “Everyone has to be screened both before and during the jail visit. All keys, wallets, jewelry and valuables are to be left with the deputies before entering. Recently I took a plastic fraction pie kit inside, and they had to count all of the pieces before and after my tutoring session. We may take pencils in, but we cannot let the students keep them. Laminated sheets of any kind are prohibited. Only paperback books are permitted. Tutors and students meet at a table in a downstairs hallway with surveillance cameras all around. An officer monitors everything we say and do. If the table is full, then we can go in a locked room to work. From the time we log in until the time we leave, we are

constantly monitored via camera. Due to the jail’s strict schedule, we are limited in the hours we can provide our volunteer services. This summer the jail has been closed to visitors for six weeks.”

Despite such strict oversight, Literacy Volunteers of Culpeper County operates a successful Pre-GED/GED preparation program at their local jail with three volunteers. Peninsula READS oversees a small literacy program organized many years ago in the Newport News jail. Two volunteers tutor there once a week, teaching both regular and transient prisoners. Pittsylvania currently provides five tutors who attend weekly sessions with their students inside the jail, providing extra work for the inmates in the GED program.

Some organizations encounter unexpected barriers in helping inmates reach their literacy goals. Sallie Garrett, director of Highlands Literacy Project in Abingdon, spoke about the difficulty in making progress with an inmate who left jail after only two sessions. Janet Booth of Eastern Shore Literacy Council mentioned that one inmate chose not to continue his literacy instruction after his early release. Her program operates in two counties, each of which is governed by different jail policies and guidelines.

Some programs do not have their volunteers work within the confines of the local jails. BEACON in Prince William County receives referrals from pro-

bation officers for clients who need instruction. Skyline Literacy Coalition in Dayton trains literacy coordinators hired by a transition house to instruct GED students.

Many programs, like Tidewater Literacy Council, have worked with jails in the past and remain open to future partnerships. In some areas, such as Mount Rogers and Campbell County, public adult education programs already provide GED instruction in jails. They contact community based organizations when volunteer tutors are needed to help with one on one instruction.

To sum up, a number of literacy organizations provide literacy instruction in jails in order to strengthen our communities. Their reasons for providing instruction to inmates are similar to those expressed by Virginia Congressman Bobby Scott: “Studies have shown that inmate participation in education, vocational and job training, prison work skills development, drug abuse, mental health and other treatment programs, all reduce recidivism significantly.” ■

Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is the director of the Literacy Support Center at VALRC.

About the Department of Correctional Education

by ANITA PRINCE

The Virginia Department of Correctional Education (DCE), a separate executive branch agency, is an independent school district, with its own school board, serving both youth and adult offenders. It operates in cooperation with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). DCE provides educational opportunities to incarcerated youth and adults after they have been committed by the judicial system to the custody of the DOC or DJJ.

DCE provides testing and educational assessments for all youth and adult offenders, as well as especially mandated special education evaluations and services for identified youth and adult offenders in compliance with federal regulations. Close to half (42%) of DCE's youth and 11% of its adult students up to age 22 receive services for students eligible for special education.

DCE operates its adult programs out of DOC's 30 major correctional institutions, 11 correctional field units, four detention centers, five diversion centers, and 12 day reporting centers. The agency's adult programs provide literacy instruction, special education, adult basic education, pre-GED and GED instruction, and vocational instruction in 37 programs and three occupational trade areas. DCE also provides adult students with transition education, cognitive skills development, and limited post-secondary education made possible by private donations and federal grants. The focus of instruction is on improving the employment possibilities and life skills of individuals while incarcerated, thereby improving conditions within the institutional community, as well as aiding in their transition into the job market and home communities upon release.

All academic and vocational teachers and principals meet the same certification and endorsement standards es-

tablished for public school personnel by the Virginia Department of Education. Schools operate year round, and most academic staff members are full time, each teaching a minimum of 1080 hours per year. For security reasons, adult classes are limited to 15 individuals per class period. Academic classes meet for 90-minute periods, four class periods per day, five days a week.

There are 35,023 incarcerated individuals in Virginia's adult facilities. Of those, 8098 are eligible for the Functional Literacy Program (FLP) established by §22.1-344.1 Code of Virginia "to develop a functional literacy program for inmates testing below the eighth-grade level" on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Of the 8098 eligible, 2222 are currently enrolled in FLP. Non-native speakers of English who are unable to be TABE tested because of language barriers are exempted from FLP.

There are approximately 700 non-native speakers of English at this time. The largest category of non-native speakers of English is Hispanic (77%), with considerable native language diversity within that category; the remaining are Asian (20%) and Indian (3%). The total number of non-native speakers of English has increased about 20% over the past three years, suggesting that this population will continue to rise. It should be noted that totals do not represent the same individuals over time but cover both release and entry rates, which show the accurate number of individuals actually affected.

While representing only two percent of the overall population and approximately eight percent of the functional literacy eligible, the impact of their low literacy skills on non-native speakers of English individuals and on the prison community is significant. In a secure environment, the presence or absence of the most basic communication skills

can improve safety or increase risk, foster participation for rehabilitation or isolate and insulate. A number of recent studies have found that prison education, job training, and placement programs are associated with improved outcomes, including reduced recidivism.

Working with the Mexican Consulate, DCE has established a basic literacy program for Hispanic inmates to become literate in their native language. These are inmates who will be deported on release. The project requires a continued collaborative effort on the parts of DCE, DOC, and two Mexican government agencies—Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos (INEA) and a division of INEA, the Consejo Nacional de Educación para la Vida Y el Trabajo (CONEVyT), in English, the "National Council for Life and Work Education." Spanish speakers are enrolled in coursework leading to completion of the Mexican Primaria and Secundaria certificates. The program began in two facilities in October 2005 and has served 35 individuals. Bi-lingual tutors work with learners employing training and materials provided by CONEVyT. Nine individuals have qualified for the Primaria since beginning the program.

In the interest of establishing a more reliable baseline of the needs of non-native English speakers, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) was introduced at the DOC receiving centers July 1, 2006. Training for selected academic instructional staff on administration of the CASAS Life Skills Progress Pre- and Post-Tests for Reading and Listening Comprehension and its use in instructional planning was conducted in August 2006. ■■

Anita Prince is Director of Adult Academic Instructional Assistance at the Department of Correctional Education.

LOCAL PROGRAMS

by MARCIA PHILLIPS

As we consider the work being done by the Department of Correctional Education, we remember also that localities have jails that are not a part of the Department of Corrections, where incarcerated adults await trial or sentencing. Many local programs have classrooms in their local or regional jails and run programs for this more transient population.

Having seen the statistics and broad brush of DCE's extensive operations and the overview of the work done by literacy programs, often in conjunction with their local education programs, we sought a closer look at jail education programs. To this end, we spoke recently with Vennie Lulofs, who has taught at the Newport News City Jail since 2002, and Lynn Winfree and Sue Lee, instructors at the Roanoke Jail for 12 and 18 years, respectively.

Of the two facilities, the Roanoke jail has a slightly larger population, and Roanoke runs a larger, more inclusive program, with one full time teacher, Sue Lee, and her part time colleague, Lynn Winfree. They also have the part time

services of a special education instructor for inmates aged 22 and younger. Lee schedules the classes for the week, although they are always in a state of flux because of inmates moving out or to a different security classification. Classes are limited to six students and are multi-level; all the participants must be at the same security classification level. Each class meets twice a week for an hour and a half class session. All the participants must request to attend classes; all are assessed through the TABE and Locator. Roanoke's program has between 75 to 100 students at any given time.

In Newport News, Lulofs is the only teacher; she teaches male GED students. She is part time in the jail and has other classes with Newport News public schools. Again, the students request the class. The TABE is used to assess and select the students. "It's sort of a fast-track class," Lulofs says, "although it is a revolving door, because of the nature of their coming and going. I am always in a push to get them through. Inmates will get shipped out in the middle of the

night; I don't know whether they are released or gone to another facility, but I do know it's an incomplete cycle for me, so I've picked up the pace. Most of them are able to get their GED." Her class meets three times a week for three hours a session and is limited to eight participants. When one leaves, another is brought into the class to keep the class full.

Both programs run relatively unstructured classes. In Roanoke, students have individual plans that are monitored closely by the instructors. According to Lee, "Everyone is comfortable here. They get individual attention, unless they don't want it. Some will come in and work on their own, the entire time. Others are very high maintenance and need to be walked through every step of the way. Because of the assessments, we know exactly where they're weak, what to assign, and where to keep them working."

Winfree adds, "We have tried several times to do group work in the class, but it always falls apart. We go to a workshop or conference and get all excited about some new concept, and we come back to try it, but it doesn't work out. Because we monitor what they're doing, we can push them along a lot faster; it really works well, with the individual only studying what that person needs. Compared to a regular program, they really can progress faster if we work with them individually."

Roanoke's numbers show success; students must pass the practice test to take the GED; they have a 75 percent pass rate. So far this year, 36 people have earned their GED.

In Newport News, the class decides what they will do, or not do. Often they will form small groups, only coming together for writing or difficult math concepts. The students are all motivated to get their GEDs. At times, someone will need individual attention, but moving



Colleagues Lynn Winfree (left) and Sue Lee (right), long-time instructors at the Roanoke City Jail.

HELP PREPARE

around in the very small classroom is difficult.

Both programs have computers available for their students to use, although there is no Internet access. Both programs report that the students are eager to use the computers. Roanoke has a typing program, which benefits many students who already have a GED or high school diploma. “These days,” Lee remarks, “for any job, even at McDonald’s, keyboard and computer skills are necessary.”

“Many of the programs,” says Lulofs, “the job readiness and the GED, translate into more opportunities for them, and more money in their pockets.”

In both facilities, the students, al-

“These days for any job, even at McDonald’s, keyboard and computer skills are necessary.”

though many of them are young, have been out of school for some time. Lulofs says that when she first heard students saying that they stopped going to school in sixth or seventh grade, or that they had no family, she didn’t believe it. But now she does. Lee agrees that most of the young men started getting into trouble in seventh and eighth grade. “They got no support or encouragement when they were young, school just slipped by, and they left it. They saw no reason to continue.”

All agree that the motivation of their inmate students is different from that of the typical adult education student. Lulofs says, “I am dealing with people who signed up, who made a conscious decision: ‘I want the GED.’ This is not a vacation spot, but when they are in jail, nothing else takes their attention.”

Lee adds, “They are grateful for the

opportunity to come to class. I am not sure what is different about their motivation, but it is there.”

“We work on the soft skills, too,” says Winfree. “Sometimes someone will miss a class, because he didn’t get up in time, and I will say, ‘You know you have class every Monday at 12:30. You need to adhere to the schedule.’ A lot of them have never worked. They have never had to face that responsibility or accountability.”

Lulofs adds to that train of thought, “One thing I do is have them clean up their language in class. I say we will not have hood talk in the classroom. I want them to understand that in certain places, they will have to act with more decorum. Most of them are lacking social manners; they have never encountered them in their lives.”

Lynn Winfree says, “I enjoy my job immensely. I have been here a long time. Every day is different, and each brings another challenge. From the student’s perspective, up to now they have been unsuccessful. We have no discipline problems, although they do like to talk among themselves.”

“I enjoy working with the inmates,” Sue Lee says. “They are regular people who have made bad decisions, and it is hard to break those habits. I have seen some of the same folks again, or I have known family members – fathers, brothers, uncles – before.”

“It is a rewarding experience,” Vennie Lulofs agrees, “but sometimes I feel that I am spitting in the ocean; I don’t see an end in sight. I guess that’s a form of job security, but it speaks ill of society. General education has failed them for whatever reason. It is sad to see so much talent wasted. I have no discipline problems or attendance problems. What we do is a lot of social work as well as finding the teachable moment.”

Lee puts the jail education experience into this perspective, “Our purpose



Vennie Lulofs teaches GED preparation at Newport News City Jail.

really is just to get them ready for down the road. The city jail is a holding facility. Their whole experience here is a preparation for their next step.”

Adult education in the jails offers the opportunity for guidance and education for making the next step the beginning of good choices. Richard Sebastian, e-FSET coordinator at VALRC, remembering his time working in the Henrico jail, comments, “For many of my students, jail was a time when they could begin thinking about turning things around. Up until then, they had reacted to things going on in their lives, and most of these were negatives. Although no one likes jail, this was a good facility, they got their meals, and their lives were not so stressed. A lot of my students responded to this calm, and we could see them begin to get in control.” ■

an INTERVIEW with JUDY PHILPOTT

by MARCIA PHILLIPS

Recently, we interviewed Judy Philpott, Senior Assistant Superintendent for Adult Programs at the Department of Correctional Education, to talk about the function of the Department and the award that the agency won for one of its programs.

Q: Tell me how the Department came into being.

Judy Philpott: Originally, correctional education was provided as part of the Department of Health Welfare and Institutions, an agency combining both social services and corrections. In 1974, a group of state legislators, including my father, A.L. Philpott, were touring the old Spring Street state penitentiary, and they observed school personnel serving as prison guards. The legislators, feeling that the role of the educators within the state prison system should be protected, established a new state agency, known as the Rehabilitative School Authority.

The agency took charge of juvenile facilities and schools as well as prison-run schools. It was renamed the Department of Correctional Education in the mid-80s, to give focus and independence to the educational aspects of the prison system. The prison schools still serve as tenants in their houses, so to speak.

Q: When the legislature made this move, were they looking at what other states do?

Judy Philpott: Virginia is the only state in the country that has an independent agency for its schools. In other states, the function is found either under Corrections or under the Department of Education. In some cases, prison schools

are a part of the local school system. There are a couple of states that are considering making a change to this model.

Our advantage is that we are able to give clear focus to our participants' needs.

Q: Talk a little about the programs offered through the Department.

Judy Philpott: We have 9 juvenile correctional centers and 34 adult centers, with two more due to come on line in the next two years. We give a full array of vocational offerings and offer ABE through the GED.

Plaza Comunitaria has raised the awareness of correctional officers about cultural differences between Americans and Latin Americans, things they hadn't taken into consideration.

At one point the Functional Literacy Program (FLP) on the adult side went up to 6th grade. That was changed to 8th grade; we have adapted our system to the one used by the Department of Education, although it is a little problematic as we end up in the middle of level 4. We can raise it to 9th grade, but that will take legislative action. Our biggest challenge with that is that we already have waiting lists.

Inmates get points for completing their Functional Literacy Program (FLP). The GED is an extra. We require that they pass the Official Practice Test before they take the GED, since we pay for their taking the GED, not the inmate. It comes out of our budget. Everything is geared to the interest of our students. If someone is within six weeks of his release time and needs some extra work in one area to pass the test, then we encourage the staff to be flexible, to work with that person intensively and try to get him tested, because the more tools we can give them, the less likely they'll come back.

There is some post-secondary work being done in some facilities. It is grant funded, not a part of our program, not out of our budget. Post-secondary is important because the biggest effect on recidivism is found in those who have received post-secondary education. It is so difficult now that the federal program eliminated Pell Grant funding. We are looking for other grant funding, and there are some self-pays, but it is my hope that the Pell Grants will be reinstated. There are some bills being developed to make Functional Literacy Programs mandatory, meaning there will be no waiting lists; the cost for this will be fairly significant.

We have a grant with Virginia Tech to do Cost Benefit Analysis looking at vocational education, general education and post-secondary education.

We have done some work with the Youthful Offender Grants. These are for people 25 years old or younger who are serving 5 year terms or less. They transition through the community colleges. Our participants in those programs have

performed significantly better than the community college students at large. In the same vein, our GED pass rate is above the state pass rate. The people we are serving do perform when they are given the opportunity. In many cases, the opportunity was not provided for them in the past, or they had extremely poor role models or otherwise made poor decisions before incarceration.

We also have people participating in the WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificate program. To date, we have tested 772 inmates. Of those, approximately 94% have earned their CRC, and of that percentage, 67% are at the gold or silver level. We are very affirmed by that.

Q. You recently won an award for one of your programs. What is the program and why is this so significant?

Judy Philpott: The program is called Plaza Comunitaria. It is a collaboration with the government of Mexico. The program provides ABE tutoring in Spanish to inmates under a detainer order whose birth countries are Hispanic. They are likely to be deported upon their release from jail. While it was originally intended only for Mexicans, its availability has been extended to South and Central Americans as well. The intent of the program is to raise the literacy level of these people, so that the opportunities available to them when they return to their native land will be improved.

We signed the agreement with Mexico and got trained in Mexico. The program coordinator is Charles Hedrick of DCE. The Mexican government sent staff to train inmates to become tutors. There are six instructors in each of two facilities: Coffeewood Correctional Center and Lunenburg Correctional Center. There are 30 to 40 participants in each location with a few on a waiting list, representing almost every Latin American country.

The program was begun in September 2005. It covers Primaria and Secundaria levels, the equivalent to elementary edu-

cation, which top out at the equivalent of 6th grade. That is where free public education ends in Mexico. We have recently made this program mandatory for low-level Hispanic students in the same way we provide the FLP for people with low literacy levels.

Those who complete the Secundaria get credit from the Mexican government. Other embassies are willing to work with us as well, so it is definitely a win-win situation. The Plaza tutors are the guys who made it happen. They are totally committed to the program and strong advocates for their learners.

One thing we did find was resistance from some of the inmates who wanted to learn English, not Spanish, because English makes them more marketable to employers in their birth country. So we established that as long as they have completed their Secundaria, they can then go into Pre-GED preparation to build their skills for taking the English GED. We won't give the Spanish GED.

The award we received is the Cultural Enhancement Award, given by the National Association of Hispanics in Criminal Justice. It was presented in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in April 2006.

The program has raised the awareness of correctional officers about cultural differences between Americans and Latin Americans, things they hadn't taken into consideration. Although other states have used Plaza Comunitaria in some ways, the Virginia program is the only one run through an adult state prison system.

Q: How did you get involved in correctional education?

Judy Philpott: I started out as an elementary school teacher and then moved into special education. I taught at the Bon Air Correctional Center. In 1976, I worked with the Hopkins Commission, which reorganized state government, but my interest was primarily with working with issues involving the handicapped. I worked for Governor Robb's Committee on Needs for the Handicapped, and then worked in various agencies involved in human services. I served with the Peace Corps in South Africa, and when I returned from there, became the Senior Assistant Superintendent for Adult Programs. ■■



Superintendent Walter MacFarlane and Judy Philpott, Senior Assistant Superintendent, display their award for Cultural Enhancement, given by the National Association of Hispanics in Criminal Justice.

Inside Out

DCE's EL/Civics Program

by ANITA PRINCE

This year, DCE was awarded an EL/Civics grant from Virginia's Office of Adult Education to implement an ESOL

The Inside Out program ... establishes ESOL classes within adult correctional facilities where none currently exist ...

program. The Inside Out program addresses the grant priority to "increase the number of EL/Civics students served through greater accessibility to ESOL/Civics classes" by establishing ESOL classes within adult correctional facilities in Virginia where none currently exist. Additionally, the program will address the priority of "including the use of technology in teaching and learning" by exploring the incorporation of the instructional materials developed into its instructional software, AZTEC, and its distance education programs.

Inside Out has four essential components: staff development, ESOL tutor selection and training using inmate tutors, modification or development of two to three instructional modules tailored to incarcerated adults, and implementation of ESOL instruction in four pilot sites.

Staff Development

A small cadre of 10-12 academic instructional staff, including classroom instructors from the four proposed pilot sites, others who instruct in sites with

substantial ESOL populations, and a distance education instructor, will be developed. The proposed staff development will include VALRC's ESOL Basics, CASAS assessment and instructional planning training for instructors, and the Center for Applied Linguistics' (CAL) Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners. Additionally, each participating staff member will be given a copy of VALRC's ESOL Starter Kit and will receive on-site, individualized assistance by the ESOL Coordinator.

DCE requires 40 hours of continuing professional development for staff each year. Participating instructors will use staff development release time to participate in the targeted training. Instructors who have not participated in ESOL Basics will be asked to register for the on-line workshop scheduled to begin in September 2006. DCE staff conducted the CASAS training in August 2006. Dr. David Red, Adult ESOL Coordinator for Fairfax County Public Schools' Adult and Community Education Program, conducted the CAL training in mid-September 2006.

ESOL Tutor Selection and Training (Inmate Tutors)

Alan Brittle, Literacy Coordinator for DCE, will oversee the second component of Inside Out: selecting and training inmate tutors to work with ESOL learners in proposed pilot sites. Inmate tutors are currently used extensively in DCE classrooms and are paid hourly wages by the DOC. In addition to the ProLiteracy training provided annually to tutors, ESOL tutors will receive train-

ing on working with adult English language learners by the ESOL and Literacy Coordinators. The preparation of selection criteria and the actual selection of tutors (two per site in each of the four pilot sites) took place from August through the end of September 2006. Initial training of selected tutors began in September 2006 and is expected to be ongoing throughout the project.

Trained inmate dorm tutors, supervised by a DCE instructor, provide one-on-one assistance to distance learners in DOC's highest security level facilities, where classroom instruction either is not available or is limited. Once the program is piloted and proposed instructional modules are completed, the Inside Out program will be extended through DCE's distance education capabilities, and additional dorm tutors will be selected and trained.

Trained inmate dorm tutors, supervised by a DCE instructor, provide one-on-one assistance to distance learners in DOC's highest security level facilities ...

Instructional Modules

The third program component consists of modifying or developing instructional modules addressing the special needs of incarcerated adults, both while institutionalized and when transitioning

upon release. Two or three modules will be scripted with the assistance of instructors participating in the program, learners, inmate tutors and correctional staff, and in consultation with previous EL/Civics grantees who have demonstrated expertise. Institutional safety, health literacy, and jobs and work will be the areas targeted. It is anticipated that pilot sites will be offered the opportunity to adopt one of the content areas as a project learning opportunity.

Accompanying instructional CDs will be produced to provide additional resources to the classrooms and to introduce ESOL instruction into DCE's closed circuit broadcast distance education programs. The distance education system employs pre-recorded/programmed instruction delivered via closed circuit television. Dorm tutors provide one-on-one support under the direction and supervision of a DCE instructor. Though not presently in use, two facilities have studio capabilities for live broadcast possibilities at a later time. It is anticipated that 119 individuals will be served through the

distance instruction facilities.

ESOL Pilots

The fourth component is implementation of ESOL instruction in four pilot sites with 10 learners at each site, for a total of 40 learners who are not currently

Learners selected for the pilot at each site will be assigned to one of two five-learner instructional groups.

enrolled in other classes, by September 2006. DCE principals were recently surveyed to determine an approximate number of non-native speakers not currently served at each institution. DCE can confirm potential enrollees through its AESIS database, with the cooperation of principals and intake staff. Beginning July 1, 2006, CASAS Appraisals are re-

quired for individuals presenting as non-native English speakers. This will assist DCE's identifying those entering institutions for possible inclusion.

Initially, learners selected for the pilot at each site will be assigned to one of two five-learner instructional groups, each group meeting at one of two class periods. The primary reason for splitting the group into two is a function of overall enrollment demands and needs unique to DOC facilities.

Each learner will receive 90 minutes of instruction per day, five days per week most weeks, for the duration of the grant. It is estimated that this will result in approximately 265 total hours of actual instructional time per learner. ■

Anita Prince is Director of Adult Academic Instructional Assistance at the Department of Correctional Education

Click: On Online Degrees - continued from page 3

complete set of back editions of the *Journal of Correctional Education* (JCE, going back to 1937.) Its faculty is known for their leadership and scholarship in the field. The JCE was published at CSUSB for years, and before that the *Yearbook of Correctional Education* was published there. Dr. Eggleston just completed a term as president of the International CEA. Dr. Wright is director of CEA Region VII (in which California is located), and Dr. Gehring is the CEA historian. These CSUSB faculty members recently prepared electronic indices of the Center's reference holdings to promote access and wrote two new texts on institutional education. CSUSB was awarded a CEA Highly Qualified Teacher contract to provide online courses in Fundamentals

of Correctional Education, Teaching the Correctional Student, and Correctional Education Leadership. Inquiries from leaders and practitioners in other states and nations suggest the field is ready for the new degree program.

Courses in the Education—Correctional and Alternative (EDCA) Program are displayed on page 3. Where there are enough interested correctional educators, the Center can provide courses at remote settings during special intensive terms, usually for a full week or three weekends. In addition, the three courses with asterisks will be offered online. Since many vocational educators in corrections are working toward their undergraduate degrees, all courses will be offered at the graduate and undergraduate levels, with

different workloads. For information contact Thom Gehring [tgehring@csusb.edu or (909) 537-5653], Carolyn Eggleston [egglesto@csusb.edu or (909) 537-5654], or the CSUSB Educational Psychology and Counseling Department [(909) 537-5606]. ■

Thom Gehring is currently Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Correctional Education at California State University, San Bernardino. While living in Virginia, he worked at the Rehabilitative School Authority, forerunner to DCE.

See more at <http://www.ceanational.org/>

Correctional Education: Slow Change in a Fast World

continued from front page

- Ex-offenders within three years of their release date who participated in literacy programs returned to prison at a rate 29% lower than those who did not.
- Less than 8% of women who attended college while in prison returned to prison, compared to 30% of matched peers who did not take college classes.

These drops in re-incarceration might seem small. And of course, there are margins of error that have to be considered; some of the data may be over or under reported.

But with well over 625,000 prisoners being released back to U.S. communities every year and a 60% national re-incarceration rate, a 30% drop in recidivism could mean the difference in the lives of 112,500

inmates, their families and communities – in one year alone! In economic terms, one study found the average cost of a vocational training program per inmate was \$1,960, but the net savings to taxpayers and the community, taking into consideration reduced re-incarceration costs and projected harm to citizens, was more than \$12,000. Multiply that by 112,500, and the net spreads large.

Why do more people not think of these programs as an investment rather than a frill? Perhaps because the life changes resulting from educational programs happen slowly and are not easily summarized in even the best performance measures (although these measures are important, and we need to continuously strive to make them reflect the real impact of our work).

So it is up to each one of us to bring this hopeful message to those who, in this fast-paced world, would not otherwise see it. Help them see how much better it would be if that ex-offender traded in a drug habit for a reading habit. And then, for the sake of all of us and our communities, go thank a correctional educator. ■

William R. Muth is Assistant Professor of Reading Education and Adult Literacy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Plaza Comunitaria at Lunenburg

by JESUS GRACIA

La Plaza Comunitaria has been in operation here at Lunenburg Correctional Center for nearly a year. This program is based on the concept that people need to be literate in their own language before they can go on to study other languages.

I have been involved in this program since its inception. As a teacher's aide, I have had the unique opportunity to work first-hand with the Hispanic population here at Lunenburg. It is important to remember that an educational opportunity like this is not readily available to people from Latin American countries.

Normally with any government undertaking, programs are hindered by red tape, and this is even more evident in the prison setting. However, that has not been the case with Plaza Comunitaria. The operation of this program has been very efficient. Everyone concerned has handled any questions or concerns we

have had in a timely manner. The aides and students are aware of the support given to this program, and this in turn has been very motivational.

The Plaza Comunitaria has opened the door for educational advancement for people from Latin American countries. So when a student is enrolled in this program, and is told he can study in his own language, and can receive his primary and secondary diploma, he is very excited. In many cases, this is the first time in his life that he has had the chance to get an education, and for some students, this is the first time they have ever been in class. Now students are brightened with the possibility of returning to their country with an educational diploma, because that will improve their chances of getting a job. This has given the students higher self-esteem and consequently improved their overall behavior on a daily basis.

The aides that work with the students are rewarded by seeing their students learn and develop at an amazing rate. To say that this program is a success would be an understatement. One has only to look at the students' attendance records, tests taken, test scores, books read, and diplomas received. I am very proud to say that I am involved with this program, and I will continue to give it 100 percent, as I am sure everyone else will as well.

There is an old Cuban saying my family used: "If you have lightning in the bottle, don't touch the cork." ■

Editor's Note: This article and Zarco's Story, found on the back page, were written by inmate tutors involved in Plaza Comunitaria at their facilities. Zarco's name was changed to protect his identity.

Partnership between DCE and VALRC Promotes Professional Development

by GEORGE BAILEY

Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) has worked closely over the years with the Department of Correctional Education (DCE) to provide professional development services to DCE instructors. VALRC has regularly provided trainings and workshops on a variety of topics in literacy, adult basic, and GED education at the DCE's professional development conferences in Richmond. And DCE employees, including instructors and training coordinators, often attend VALRC professional development workshops delivered regularly across the state. This partnership has worked very well as a means of sharing resources and has served numerous adult educators in both adult education and correctional education.

However, a particular challenge of this arrangement of shared resources has been the question of how to address the unique environment of correctional education from a general adult education perspective. Many obvious, and some not-so-obvious, differences exist between instruction presented in a correctional setting and that in a non-correctional setting. DCE instructors are often faced with the challenge of modifying the recommendations, activities, and instructional strategies discussed at any given VALRC workshop or training into an effective application for the correctional environment. To paraphrase a comment often reported on VALRC workshop evaluation forms by DCE workshop participants: "The activities in today's workshop were very informative and the instructional strategies and recommendations were helpful, but the application of much of what we learned would be difficult in our instructional environment."

In an attempt to address this appli-

cation issue, VALRC has entered into an agreement with DCE to provide training in adult education and literacy issues specifically designed for DCE instructors and/or any instructor in a correctional setting. The redesigned training will not focus on content changes (although some changes may be necessary) since the basic tenets of adult education theory and the same core content standards still apply. Instead, the changes made by the train-

The changes made by the trainers will focus primarily on methodology and an increased awareness of the unique needs of the DCE instructors.

ers will focus primarily on methodology and an increased awareness of the unique needs of the DCE instructors, the instructional challenges faced by teachers in a correctional setting, and strategies for addressing these needs.

Michael Salyer, Training and Development Coordinator at the Department of Correctional Education, met with Resource Center staff in early July to discuss a plan to develop and deliver professional development services for DCE instructors and other providers of adult correctional education services. Traditionally, staff development training for DCE centered around three training events scheduled throughout the year. These week-long events were conducted in the greater Richmond area. However, bringing all the teachers to Richmond for

centralized training has become untenable, and at the direction of the agency superintendent, Walter McFarlane, the training function was decentralized, and the agency was divided into five regional training areas. This served not only to reduce travel expenditures, but also to take the training closer to the work centers, so that teachers could spend more time in their classrooms and less time traveling. Sending trainers to these areas at least twice a year was a daunting challenge, and it quickly became apparent that expert help was needed in order to deliver quality and relevant ABE training at these sites.

Training topics for this year were determined through two methods. First, participants filled out needs assessments at each training session. Next, the Adult School Principals gave their recommendations for classes, as they are considered well suited to determine the training needs of their teachers at the working level. From these efforts, DCE training and development staff determined that Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities and Numeracy training were the high priority issues. These have been scheduled for the upcoming months.

Working with VALRC to customize these presentations is a high priority for the training department at DCE. Currently, a working group that includes both DCE and VALRC staffers is being formed to begin developing the Numeracy curriculum. They are looking forward to meeting the challenge of providing effective and useful approaches to their colleagues. ■

George Bailey is the assistant manager, programs at VALRC.

LESLLA 2006

by NANCY FAUX

LESLLA 2006 will be held in Richmond, Virginia, November 2-3, hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University and the Washington D.C.-based American Institutes for Research. Over sixty renowned researchers, practitioners, and policy makers will convene at *Research, Practice, and Policy for Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition – for Adults (LESLLA)* to develop and gain consensus on an international agenda in these three areas vis-à-vis the issues pertaining to the adult, low educated, second language/literacy learner.

Speaking at the plenary session will be Jeff Chenoweth, Division Director of National Operations and Support for Catholic Legal Immigration Network,

Inc.; Heidi Spruck Wrigley of Literacy Works in Chicago; and Joy Kreeft Peyton, Director of CAELA and Vice-President of the Center for Applied Linguistics.

The forum will be the U.S. premiere of the award-winning film, *Newcomers in Morocco*. The film, which won the European Quality Label Prize, was filmed in Morocco and demonstrates the reactions of Dutch teachers when they become the newcomers in an unfamiliar culture. Noureddine Erradi, from Brussels, Belgium, who directed the film, will make the presentation.

On Friday, LESLLA panel members will lead moderated discussions. Dr. Danielle Boon, Project Director of UNDP Timor-Leste will present “Adult Literacy Project in East Timor”;

Dr. James Simpson of the University of Leeds, UK, will present “Classroom literacy practices of entry level ESOL learners in England”; and Dr. Daniel Wagner, Director of the National Center on Adult Literacy/International Literacy Institute will present “Language, literacy, and technology in out-of-school youth and adults: A comparative impact study in India and South Africa.”

To close the forum, working groups will meet to define the most relevant issues for research and promotion.

If you have extensive experience or have conducted relevant research with this population and have an interest in attending the forum, please contact Nancy Faux at nfaux@vcu.edu or 800-237-0178. ■■



VALRC Weblogs

by STEPHEN GRAINER



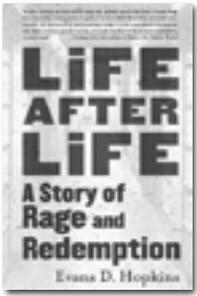
When I joined as the webmaster here at the Resource Center over three years ago, I dreamed of creating a space where our specialists could share the same knowledge and experience on the web that they share regularly at workshops and conferences. I wanted to make it easy for them to post, in their own words, meaningful discussions, information, and even training updates. Finally, they can.

I'm very excited to announce the VALRC Weblog, with sections for each specialist to discuss their unique area of interest in more detail. These sections include:

- Assessment
- ESOL
- GED
- Learning Disabilities
- Literacy Programs
- Numeracy
- Reading
- Technology
- Workforce Education

Check them out. Visit our website at www.valrc.org and click on one of the concentrations on the left hand side. Or peruse our entire Weblog by clicking the Weblog tab at the top of the page.

If you have any suggestions for a particular section, email the specialist using the Contact options in that section. If you have suggestions for the overall weblog system, you can contact me using the Feedback link at the bottom of every page. ■■



Book Review:

Life after Life: A Story of Rage and Redemption

Written by EVANS HOPKINS / Reviewed by MARCIA PHILLIPS

Evans Hopkins was born in the 1950s in Danville, Virginia, when that city, and indeed the rest of the South, was still segregated. He has memories of shopping at the one big grocery store that accepted black customers and buying shoes without being able to try them on or return them. His family was warm and loving, middle-class, and placed a high value on education. As a teenager, Hopkins loved playing tennis and for a time thought to follow in the footsteps of his idol, Arthur Ashe. But the 1960s were also an era of activism, and young Evans got involved with the Civil Rights Movement, so much so that after his graduation from high school, he went to Oakland, California, to be a part of the Black Panther Party.

In Oakland, he began his writing career, working on the Party newspaper. He soon became historian of the group and observed the organization at the time when the Black Panthers moved towards community outreach and working within the system. It was not an easy move, and the dissension within the group, as well as the escalating violence that took several lives, served to foster the radicalism in Hopkins. And the rage.

Ultimately, it made him decide to go back to Danville. The man who returned to the city of his birth was far different from the youth who had left. Looking back, Hopkins described himself as being “the quintessential angry young black male.” Convicted of armed robbery, he was sentenced to life in prison.

While his rage was still strong, Hopkins also had a talent that served him well. He began to write to overcome the all-encompassing noise of life in prison. Focusing on his themes of social injustice, he reached a national audience in 1982, when the *Washington Post* published his

essay, “Who’s Afraid of Virginia’s Chair?” a study of the first execution in Virginia after reinstating the death penalty. More articles followed, and he found himself published in the *New Yorker*, among other noted publications. Excerpts from these writings are included in the book, *Life After Life*. Interest in this gifted writer, one of the best known incarcerated writers of the end of the 20th Century, grew. Support for his release came not only from the writing community, but also from the prosecutor who sought his life sentence.

Hopkins tells of the epiphany that began to turn his life around. He had been told that the gas station attendant whom he had robbed required counseling.

“It hit me then. My feeling of injustice had kept me from feeling empathy for the victim of the crime. But my writer’s brain now embraced his pain, imagining the country boy’s sessions with a psychologist, then wondering about the other victims of my crimes: the old night watchman...the people in the bank...”

He tells too of the personal pain: the death of his young son, born with a congenital heart defect, the death of his best friend in prison, and that of his girl friend, killed in an accident while on her way to visit him in prison, and the slow decline of his aging parents.

After his release from prison in 1997, he returned home one more time, this time to the overwhelming challenges of dealing with aging parents and a daily life that is entirely different to one who has been imprisoned.

Writing the book took two years; Hopkins calls the process “gut-wrenching.” At its conclusion, he has moved beyond the anger and learned to forgive, not only society, but also himself. With this book, he hopes to build a

legacy, and he thinks of the “young man searching a prison library, searching the shelves as I once did, looking for hope and inspiration – something to let him know his life matters.”

The book, published in 2005, achieved considerable acclaim, and has shown Hopkins an interesting path for his own continuing redemption.

Hopkins lives in Richmond, although he still spends considerable time in Danville. In addition to his writing, he is working on two projects. The first is a writing program that he calls Your Stories Matter for at-risk youth, which he would also like to take into correctional facilities. The program encourages participants to write, either poetry or journal entries, so that, he says, “they will learn to understand that their lives matter, and as long as they believe in themselves, they can achieve. I tell them how writing saved my life and helped me to rise above my situation while in prison.”

He continues, “My message to administrators is that, by using writing as a tool and helping students to enjoy sharing their stories, reading aloud to one another and seeing their stories in print, they will help students to believe in themselves. I want educators, as well, to believe in their mission and to understand that their stories, while working in a difficult field, matter so very much to society.”

Hopkins has also begun a non-profit organization, Reclamation Movement, Inc., to develop a national action strategy to unite a variety of community, civic, government, and faith-based organizations. The desire to do better by his community still burns within Evans Hopkins, fired now by hope and a belief in the future. ■

PROGRESS

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Plaza Comunitaria - Zarco's Story

by J. RASUWL

I argue with Zarco – the blue-eyed Salvadoran – that history is important because it shows us the potential that we have to do great things through the accomplishments of those who came before us. He's fixed on the idea that it's important because we get to know why things are the way they are today, because of the decisions made by those before us. One thing is for sure; I can see effects on him as he sits across the table from me smiling while reenacting historical events in Spanish, as if he witnessed them with his own eyes. It's hard to believe that this is the same gangster that used to come in with a chip the size of a tree on his shoulder, showing me his gang tattoos as if they would scare me from helping him learn English. They did. I wouldn't force anything on anyone, especially in a prison.

Now, a year later, I'm his tutor in Spanish class. That same slick mouth that used to spit profanities sharp as razor blades now releases metaphors and phrases

in Spanish that float like butterflies. The old Zarco used to imitate the images of the Hispanics that he'd known through movies: *Scarface*, *American Me*, *Carlito's Way*. Now, the new Zarco discusses the political philosophies of Che Guevara and the application of what he's learning into his everyday life outside of class.

There are a lot of Zarcos in prison – the old and new. Since the Plaza Comunitaria has begun here at Coffeewood Correctional Center, I've seen that positive transformation repeatedly. The class educates inmates in their native language of Spanish up to the high school level in math, science, Spanish and history. The students excel in this class. There are sixteen students in the class. So far, four students have graduated from primary to secondary level. Over 90 percent of the students have passed their final examinations.

The students also score much higher in their self-esteem. They see the contributions of Latin Americans, and as Mes-

tizos, Hispanics of Native American and Spanish descent, they appreciate how their ancestors created an advanced numerical system and a calendar more accurate than the Gregorian one introduced by the Spaniards. Learning these types of facts serves as a major boost to their sense of worth. It is hard to understand the greatness of Native Americans when the only thing you know is the Lone Ranger's sidekick, Tonto – which actually translates into stupid in Spanish – tagging behind the great white horse on his little tainted pinto.

Society may wish to look at prisoners as dogs that need to be punished, not educated. Maybe they're right. I mean, we hear that, "What's up, dog?" in here all day. Society should just remember how a dog reacts when you poke it with a stick all day in its cage. Everyone I know here has a release date. When that cage opens, you have to ask yourself, "Who do I want to see come out? The old Zarco or the new one?" ■