

LITERACY AND CORRECTIONS

Research shows that education is one of the most effective forms of crime prevention. Educational skills can deter people from committing criminal acts and can decrease recidivism. Inmates who complete education programs are more successful after release than those who do not complete programs. Inmates need certain skills to make a successful transition back into society once they are released from prison.

NATIONAL STATISTICS

- As of 2009, approximately 7.2 million individuals in the United States were incarcerated, on parole, or on probation. This is equivalent to “3.1% of all U.S. adult residents or 1 in every 32 adults”¹.
- 75% of America’s state prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma².

According to recent research, 1 in 10 adolescent males without a high school diploma are in jail or in juvenile detention facilities. Only 1 in 35 adolescent male high school graduates are in jail or juvenile detention facilities. The African-American community has higher rates of incarceration than the national average with 1 in 4 African – American students, without a high school diploma, becoming incarcerated. Asian-Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians are incarcerated at a rate of 1 in 14 students³.

A higher percentage of prison inmates than adults living in households have below basic quantitative literacy (39 percent compared with 21 percent), but the differences in the percentage of prison inmates and adults living in households who had below basic prose or document literacy was not statistically significant⁴.

- The average reading level of prison inmates is very low: below the 5th grade reading level in one study and below 8th grade in another study.
- About 67% of prison inmates cannot write a brief letter explaining a billing error, read a map, or understand a bus schedule.
- 9% of all prisoners with low literacy skills receive literacy training while in prison.
- 20% of adults who have been in prison education programs are re-incarcerated.
- 49% of adults who have not been in prison education programs are re-incarcerated⁵.

- High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime.
- A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 per each male high school graduate⁶.

FLORIDA STATISTICS

- As of June 2009, there were 100,894 inmates in the Florida prison system compared to 81,974 in 2005⁷.
- As of June 2009, there were 157,222 individuals in Florida under community supervision⁸.
- Of the 100,894 inmates incarcerated in the Florida prison system during fiscal year 2008-2009, approximately 60% were assessed as having less than functional literacy skills (less than a 9th grade level) and 36% were classified as having only basic literacy skills (1st-5th grade levels)⁹.

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=11>

² Lbid, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/>

³ Dillon, Sam, “Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment Among Dropouts,” *New York Times*, 8 October 2009.

⁴ National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003 <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

⁵ U.S. Adult Literacy Programs: Making a Difference. ProLiteracy America, 2003 <http://www.proliteracy.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=18>

⁶ Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003 http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/straight_as/archive/2003

⁷ Florida Department of Corrections Annual Agency Report, 2008-2009 <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-im-population.html>

⁸ Lbid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-cc-population.html>

General Equivalency Diploma (GED)

- 1,953 inmates earned or verified their GED certificates while in the Florida prison system during FY 2009¹⁰.
- 2,064 inmates enrolled in GED courses during the same period¹¹.
- 23,085 inmates were enrolled in 22,840 courses during FY 2009¹².

Classes in Correctional Settings

Participation in Correctional Education Classes in FY 2008-09						
Enrollments	Mandatory Literacy	Adult Basic Education	ITA	GED	Vocational	Total
Number of Courses	1,700	8,086	6,201	2,064	5,034	23,085
Number of Inmates	1,700	8,086	6,201	2,064	4,789	22,840
Completions						
Number of Courses	412	557		1,953	1,881	4,803
Number of Inmates	412	557		1,953	1,562	4,484

Florida Department of Corrections Annual Agency Report 2008- 2009

Factors Affecting Recidivism

- Recent research has indicated that inmates who have earned a GED while incarcerated “recidivate 7.9% less than inmates overall¹³.”
- Inmates who receive a GED and improve their TABE score to 9th grade level or higher are 25% less likely to recidivate than those who receive a GED and have a TABE level of 8th grade or less¹⁴.
- A Florida inmate’s probability of recidivating decreases 3-4% for every grade level gained¹⁵

⁹ Ibid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-im-education.html>

¹⁰Ibid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-im-ged-vocational.html>

¹¹ Ibid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/education.html>

¹² Ibid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/education.html>

¹³ Ibid, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-im-ged-vocational.html>

¹⁴ Florida Department of Corrections Annual Agency Report 2007-2008, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0708/education.html>

¹⁵ Florida Department of Corrections Annual Agency Report 2008-2009, <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0809/ar-im-education.html>

Grade Levels Achieved by Florida Inmates FY 2009

Grade Level	Male	Female	Total	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5	34,912	1,946	36,858	39.20%	39.20%
6	9,874	724	10,598	11.30%	50.50%
7	6,114	499	6,613	0	57.50%
8	6,034	554	6,588	0	64.50%
9	9,527	830	10,357	0	75.50%
10	3,931	367	4,298	4.60%	80.10%
11	6,318	737	7,055	0	87.60%
12	10,529	1,205	11,734	12.40%	100.00%
Missing	6,618	175	6,793		
Total	93,857	7,037	100,894	100.00%	100.00%
Median	6.7	8.3	6.9		

Florida Department of Correction Annual Agency Report 2008-2009