



Improving Education for Incarcerated Adults and Juveniles

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A large body of research shows that having a low level of education is a major risk factor for criminal behavior. To this end, the criminal justice system—at both the state and local level—provides many educational services to inmates during incarceration, with the goal of reducing recidivism by improving inmates' employment prospects when they return to their communities. Little, however, is known about how effective these programs are.

In support of The Second Chance Act of 2007—which identified correctional education as a high-priority area—the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, has awarded a research grant to *provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of correctional education and where it is headed, which correctional education programs are effective, and how effective programs can be implemented across settings*. The grant was awarded to the RAND Corporation—a nationally recognized non-partisan, non-profit public policy think tank—and their partner, the Correctional Education Association (CEA), a non-profit professional association serving educators and administrators who provide services to students in correctional settings.

The project's goal is to improve correctional education and its delivery by providing objective, empirical evidence about the efficacy of different programs and their curricular components. To accomplish this goal, we will work closely with correctional education policymakers, experts, administrators, educators, and academic researchers to understand how correctional education is being provided across the United States and the unique challenges involved in doing so and how correctional education is adapting in response to changing budgetary constraints, political pressures, and emerging technologies. Our project will include both a systematic scientific review of research on existing programs and a series of in-depth case studies of new and innovative programs. Our work will culminate in a series of publications, including a website designed specifically for practitioners, that will provide information about the range of correctional education programs and strategies available and rate their effectiveness; identify which program components are most closely associated with positive outcomes; highlight innovative programs and approaches; and provide guidance on how to develop and administer high-quality education in a correctional setting.

This project is being led by Dr. Lois Davis (Principal Investigator) and Drs. Robert Bozick and Jessica Saunders (Co-Principal Investigators) of the RAND Corporation.