

Incarcerated getting educated

By Ron Barnett, USA TODAY
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Students in the Palmetto Unified School District in South Carolina have no Internet access, no PTA and no Friday night football. That's because their school is in a prison. Still, they have performed well enough behind bars to earn their school district an "Excellent" rating on the South Carolina Annual School Report Card each of the past five years.

The Palmetto program is one of many across the USA increasingly turning to education to reduce the rate of recidivism and to give inmates hope for their future. Some of the spark for the growth in prison education programs comes from the passage of federal Second Chance Act, signed by President Bush this year, which provides \$165 million a year for programs ranging from employment services to substance-abuse treatment.

Several states have broadened their programs in the past year. Although the total number of inmates in California decreased by more than 4,700 from March 2007 to August 2008, the number of inmates enrolled in academic programs there grew from 11,925 to 14,050, according to Jan Blaylock, superintendent of the state's Office of Correctional Education.

Figures released last week show that three times as many inmates in California's Juvenile Justice system enrolled in college courses over the past three years, and there was a 50% increase in the number of inmates passing the general equivalency diploma (GED) test, Kane said.

The educational emphasis represents a shift away from warehousing prisoners and toward preparing them for life after prison, said Eric Schultz, director of government affairs for the American Correctional Association. Out of a class of 217 students in GED classes at Tyger River in the 2007-08 school year, 186 earned the GEDs. "At least we're giving them a fighting chance when they get out," Principal Kevin Morrow said.

Some argue that spending money to educate prisoners is neither effective nor appropriate. Ted Deeds, chief operating officer of the Law Enforcement Alliance of America — a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of law enforcement professionals, crime victims and concerned citizens — said he's "extremely leery" that educating prisoners does much to rehabilitate most criminals.

Research states that the United States has the highest documented incarceration rate, and total documented prison population in the world. As of year-end 2006, a record 7.2 million people were behind bars, on probation or on parole. Of the total, 2.2 million were incarcerated. More than 1 in 100 American adults were incarcerated at the start of 2008. A report released Feb. 28, 2008 indicates that in the United States more than 1 in 100 adults is now confined in an American jail or prison. The United States has 5% of the world's population and 25% of the world's incarcerated population. The United States spends an estimated \$60 billion each year on corrections. It costs an average of \$88 dollars a day per prisoner. (Ref: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisons_in_the_United_States)

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the pros and cons of educating the incarcerated.
(GPS – Grades 6 – 8: MRC a, d)
2. Identify the number of prisoners who earned their GEDs as a fraction, decimal, and percent in the 2007-08 academic school year at Tyger River Correctional Institution. Assuming four of every ten students that did not initially meet the standard obtained their GED the following year; identify the difference between the graduates of the 2007-08 and the 08-09 school year as well as the GCF and LCM between the two annual figures.
(GPS - Grade 6: M6P1 – M6P5; MRC; M6N1 c, f, g)
3. Translate the following two verbal phrases into algebraic expressions with p representing the number of prisoners incarcerated: a) Since the 2000 census was conducted, the population for the city of McDonough, Georgia has doubled plus ten percent and equates to approximately 19,500 and b) Incorporate figures released last week regarding inmates in California's Juvenile Justice System enrolled in college courses. Communicate your mathematical thinking clearly and coherently via interpreting and solve these two equations using either the communicative, associative, and/or distributive properties as appropriate. Explain the process of converting words into variables and algebraic expressions.
(GPS Grade 7: M7P1 – M7P5; MRC; M7A1 a, b, c; M7A2 a)
4. Translate all of the applicable verbal phrases in question three into a series of algebraic expressions and solve. At a constant rate of growth, create a table and graph the results of projected prisoners in the city of McDonough for the next five decades in increments of ten years. Interpret the slope as a rate of change and determine if a linear or nonlinear relationship exist.
(GPS Grade 8: M8P1 – M8P5; M8A1 a, b, d, e; M8A4 a – c, f, g; M8A5d; M8D4a)
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2008-09 series of *The Daughtry Times*®? Express your answer interchangeably as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and circle graph.
(GPS – Grade 6: M6N1f, g; M6D1c; Grade 7: M7D1f)
6. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized words: *incarcerated*, *emphasis*, *non-partisan*, and *recidivism* obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(GPS – Grades 6 –8: MRC a, c, d)**

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) adapted from georgiastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with the curriculum map and annotated adjacent to the respective grade level inquiry.