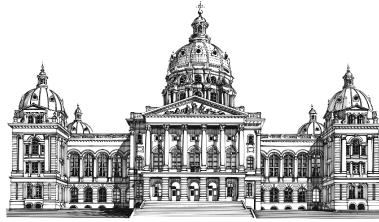


# Iowa Legislative Fiscal Bureau



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June 29, 1995

## Prison Education Programs

### ISSUE

Description of inmates' educational levels, prison educational programs, and funding levels.

### AFFECTED AGENCIES

Department of Corrections

### CODE AUTHORITY

Chapter 904.108(d), Code of Iowa

### BACKGROUND

Prison inmates typically have failed in the traditional educational system. The following table shows that less than one third of the inmates in Iowa prisons report having completed high school. Over half of those who did not complete high school report having earned a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). The assessment performed as part of the intake evaluation for prison inmates shows that approximately one fourth read at or below an eighth grade level.

**Education and Reading Levels for  
Iowa Inmates (1995)**

Grade Level	Formal Education		Reading Level	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 to 5	38	0.7%	497	10.2%
6 to 8	328	6.0%	860	17.6%
9 to 11	1,104	20.3%	1,594	32.6%
12	1,244	22.9%	1,940	39.7%
GED	2,207	40.6%		
13 to 16	498	9.2%		
17 or more	20	0.4%		

Grade Level	Formal Education		Reading Level	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Technical or Vocational	6	0.1%		
Special Education	99	1.8%		
Unknown	87	1.6%	740	15.1%
Average years	11.4		9.8	

Source: Department of Corrections, Monthly Statistical Summary (E-1), April 30, 1995

### **Teachers**

The Department of Corrections does not employ a teaching staff. The Department contracts with the community colleges serving the areas where the prisons are located. The instructors are community college employees whose work sites are located within the prisons. In FY 1995 the Department contracted for 36.5 teachers, 5 clerical staff, and 3.5 supervisory-administrative staff. Of the \$1.9 million appropriated for inmate education, \$1.8 million was expended for the contracts, most of which went to teachers' salaries. Of the remaining amount, \$69,000 was spent on educational testing and evaluation at the Oakdale facility, and \$3,000 was used for in-service staff training.

### **Courses**

The instructors teach adult education courses and vocational-technical courses that are accredited by the Department of Education. The adult education program contains the same social skills, literacy, and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) courses taught on community college campuses. The vocational-technical programs are approved by the Department of Education and provide inmates with a diploma or certificate upon successful completion (see Attachment A).

### **Participation**

Participation in educational programming is not mandatory, but the Parole Board considers as one factor, the participation in recommended treatment and educational programs in making parole decisions. Willing participation is viewed as an indication the inmate is attempting to change. Historically, the average monthly enrollment in prison educational programs is approximately 30.0% of the inmate population. Between 350 and 400 inmates earn GEDs annually. In FY 1995 the average monthly enrollment was approximately 1,600 inmates, and an estimated 380 inmates will earn a GED. Until FY 1993, inmates typically spent three to five hours per day in class. Because of the increasing inmate population and increasing demand for educational programs, inmates now spend one to two hours per day in class, thus lengthening the time for an inmate to earn a GED.

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

Iowa has reduced the appropriation for inmate education from \$2.1 million in FY 1991 to \$1.9 million in FY 1993. The appropriation has remained at that level through FY 1996. The number of teachers and support staff supported by the appropriation has decreased from 60.0 FTE positions in FY 1991 to 45.0 FTE positions in FY 1995. According to Jamie Lillis ("Prison Education Programs Reduced," The National Journal for Corrections Professionals, March 1994), at least half the state correctional systems have made budget cuts to inmate educational programs over the last five years.

The 1993 Corrections Compendium national survey discussed by Lillis showed that Iowa ranked twenty fourth of the 44 responding states for educational spending per inmate. Iowa spent \$414 per inmate for education. This was 71.1% of the national average. In regard to only the inmates participating in educational programs, Iowa spent \$1,313 per inmate, which was 58.2% of the national average.

An FY 1995 Department of Corrections survey of surrounding states shows those states spend twice as much or more than Iowa per inmate for education. Iowa spends \$325 per inmate while Nebraska, the second lowest, spends \$548 per inmate. Minnesota spends the most with \$1,792 per inmate (see Attachment B).

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Studies indicate the positive effects for inmates completing prison educational programs include higher employment rates, a tendency to remain employed, and lower recidivism rates (see Lillis, 1994).

There are several options that could be considered:

- Funding for inmate education can be continued at the same level. If this option is chosen, the teaching staff and course offerings will continue to decrease as the costs for contracting increase.
- Funding could be increased to offset rising costs and to maintain the current teaching staff and course offerings.
- Funding for inmate education could be increased sufficiently to expand the teaching staff and program offerings. The Department of Corrections would need to determine what programs are needed and what offerings would be most effective.
- The Department of Corrections could be directed to develop and carry out a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of inmate educational programming. The study could include a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether increased educational programming sufficiently reduces recidivism to offset the costs. The Department would need funding to hire a research consultant to conduct the study.
- Funding for inmate education could be reduced. Before cutting inmate educational programming, the statutory requirements for the Department to provide educational programming would need to be examined. Likewise, the effectiveness of current programs would also need to be examined to determine whether the potential increase in recidivism would offset the savings from reducing the programming.

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### Prison Educational Programs in Iowa

<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Program Length</b>	<b>Where Offered</b>
Adult Basic Education	Program for students requiring extensive assistance in reading, English, and mathematics to increase functioning level. Often prepares inmates to enter the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Program.	Until ready for GED Program	Mitchellville, Oakdale, Clarinda, Newton, Rockwell City
General Equivalency Diploma (GED)	Program of studies and tests to earn a high school equivalency diploma.	Until testing completed	All
High School Diploma	Four-course program for students who have completed the GED. Courses are offered in traditional lecture/discussion/formal test format and is intended as preparation for persons who will continue education beyond high school. The student takes a math course, a literature or English course, a science course, and a social studies course, and receives a high school diploma from Kirkwood Community College upon completion.	Four one-semester courses	Anamosa, Oakdale
Auto Body Repair	Technical program teaching body and fender repair, paint finishing, and upholstery skills. Student receives a Diploma in Auto Body Repair upon successful completion.	Two semesters	Anamosa
Auto Mechanics	Technical program developing skills in testing, servicing, and diagnosing automotive electrical, power train, fuel, and braking systems. Student receives a Diploma in Auto Mechanics upon successful completion.	Two semesters	Ft. Madison
Commercial Cooking	Technical program providing training and skills in food and nutrition, food preparation, short order cooking, quantity food preparation, safety, and baking. Student receives a Diploma in Commercial Cooking upon successful completion.	Two semesters	Ft. Madison
Dietary	Technical program providing training in food preparation and dietary management in institutional and health care settings. Student receives a Dietary Manager Specialist Certificate upon successful completion.	Two semesters	Mitchellville

### Prison Educational Programs in Iowa

<b>Program Title</b>	<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Program Length</b>	<b>Where Offered</b>
Graphics Arts	Technical program teaching the basics of the graphics arts industry, including processes, typography, letterpress operations, lithography, layout and design, camera and darkroom, platemaking, and other operations. Student receives a Diploma in Graphic Arts upon completion.	Two semesters	Ft. Madison
Machine Shop	Technical program in operating precision machine shop equipment, including bench work, layout, measurement and testing, drilling, lathe work, milling, shaping, grinding, and work planning. Student receives a Diploma in Machine Shop upon completion.	Two semesters	Ft. Madison
Upholstery	Technical program teaching use of machines and hand tools for sewing, springing and padding, tufting and frame construction for furniture repair and reupholstery work. Student receives a diploma upon completion.	Two semesters	Ft. Madison
Welding	Technical skill development for welding (oxyacetylene, electric arc, heli-arc, semi-automatic microwave, and plasma arc welding). Student receives a Diploma in Welding upon completion.	Two semesters	Anamosa, Ft. Madison
Painting	Course taught by painter journey person to prepare students for jobs in commercial and residential painting.	Ten weeks	Mitchellville
Office Technology	Vocational program to prepare inmates for careers involving basic computer applications and office technology. Training includes Word, Excel, data entry, business English, human relations, and business and career skills. Student receives a Specialist Certificate or Diploma upon completion.	One semester	Mitchellville
Industrial Arts	Technical program offering courses in woodworking, construction technology, drafting, computer assisted drafting and architectural design, furniture refinishing, and silk screen printing. Student receives a Diploma in Industrial Arts upon completion.	One semester per course	Clarinda

**Correctional Education Programs  
Bordering State Comparisons  
FY 1995**

<b>State</b>	<b>Delivery System</b>	<b>Funding Level</b>	<b>Inmate Population</b>	<b>Funding per Inmate</b>
Iowa	Contract with community colleges.	\$ 1,850,600	5,686	\$ 325
Illinois	School districts.	34,000,000	38,500	883
Wisconsin	Academic by state teachers. Vocational by college employees.	8,200,000	10,224	802
North Dakota	Contract with colleges.	400,000	667	600
South Dakota	Academic by state teachers.	1,750,000	1,772	988
Nebraska	Academic by state teachers at women's prison. Community colleges at men's prisons.	1,370,000	2,500	548
Kansas	Contract with one community college.	4,400,000	6,400	688
Minnesota	Academic by state teachers. Vocational by college employees.	8,600,000	4,800	1,792

Note: Illinois combines State and federal funding; the other states report state funding.  
 Illinois and Minnesota serve both adults and juveniles. Missouri did not respond.

Source: Department of Corrections