# The Positive Effects of Education in Prison

American prison systems are failing. Although rehabilitation is the goal for an individual who is forced to enter into the correctional system, this rarely happens. American prisons are used to lock away not only violent criminals; it also locks away drug addicts, alcoholics, and the mentally ill. These individuals are usually housed in prison to keep them out of the public’s eye site. Rather than face the real social issues that alcoholics, drug addicts and the mentally ill present, Americans find it easier and cheaper to just lock these individuals in prison. The American prisons accounts for twenty five percent of e worlds incarcerated prisoners. The saddest fact is that American only account for five percent of the world’s population(The Business Forum). Plainly there is a real problem with the American prison system. Americans can no longer afford to ignore these numbers. The fact is that Americans arrest and imprison more of its citizens than any other country in the world(The Business Forum). The most frightening fact of all, where the American prison system is concerned, is the condition. The condition under which the inmates are housed and the condition in which they live leave something to be desired. Americans imprison non-violent offenders with murders, rapist, and the mentally ill. Surely the powers that be understand how this could present a problem. Not only are this individuals housed together, they also face the unsanitary conditions of prison life. In American prison today, diseases such as AIDS, HIV, Staph infections, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis are running rampant(The Business Forum). The prevalence of violence, not limited to rape, murder, and assault, is more frequent in American prisons than anywhere else in the world(The Business Forum). Individuals who enter into the American prison system for rehabilitation usually leave worst off than they entered. The conditions alone are enough to anger and frustrate anyone. This anger and frustration usually result in some form of violence against other prisoner’s prison staff. The idea of prisoners hurting one another does not seem to lift many brows, but we must keep in mind that these individuals are sometimes released back into society. When prisoners are released back into society, they take with them whatever skills they have mastered in prison. Sometimes the skills are robbery, rape, and even murder. Prison is a training camp. What American must decide for once and for all is what their prison system is going to providing training in. The goal of The American prison system is to preserve public safety as well as rehabilitate the offender. It is evident that this is not happening. In order to maintain public safety and promote the success of prison inmates returning to society, American prison systems must change. In order to change the American prison system must allow prison inmates to make positive changes. The only way positive changes will occur in prison is through educating prisoners. The two most important benefits of inmate educational programs are preserving public safety and decreasing the rate of recidivism.

The American prison system in theory is designed to protect society by removing criminals. Unfortunately, the removal of criminals has little effect on the crime rate. The American public wants action taken against criminals. They want to see criminals punished for their actions. Again, the American prison system does not work, because of the way in which criminals are punished. Although prisons are meant to punish criminals, the American prison system punishes those who commit crimes with an excessive amount of cruelty. In most cases the punishment are not inflicted by a prison official or court of law, but the environment of prison life can be horrific(Blank Slate). Many of the events or incidents that take place in prison can have harmful long term effects. For instant, sexual assault among inmates has become a common occurrence. Nonviolent offenders are going to prison and after being housed with violent offenders, they are being raped and released with HIV and AIDS(Blank Slant). This is not only a prison issue it is a society issue. Americans are being released from prison worst off than they were when they went in. The American prison system has got to reinvent itself in order to protect the public as well as rehabilitate inmates. These issues are kept quiet behind prison walls. Rather than hide these issues behind prison wall, American must began to address these issues and plan appropriately. The only way prevent criminal from victimizing others is through an educational program. Based on the findings of the Bureau of Justice, an Inmate educational program helps reduce crime in and outside of the prison walls. Inmate education programs is effective in reducing crimes committed in prison by placing emphasis on personal responsibility, respect and tolerance for others(Education in Prison). . In the American prison system everything is done on a routine bases. This must be taken into account when discussion changes in the prison system. Routine generally become habits and as a result these habits are difficult to break after prison terms have ended. For instance, an inmate that is in the habit of preying on others in prison will continue this negative behavior after they are released. Therefore it is important to develop positive routines and rituals for inmates. There are three elements of prison education that have a positive effect on inmates. Inmates that learned new social skills and learned to read and write were the most successful after being released from prison(Journal of Correctional Education). Educating inmates enables them to obtain not only social skill, inmates also learn life skill, and coping skills.

The issue of education in prison is not new. For many American the idea of criminals receiving a free education is appalling. Especially for a low income, law abiding family who cannot afford to send their children to college. These families feel that it is unfair and unfortunate that a criminal can receive a quality education after violating laws. These types of feels are responsible for the exclusionary rules. Exclusionary laws were put into place to prevent criminals from receiving free education while serving time in prison. They also prevented thr argument that prisoners who had an income of zero were taking funds that some law abiding citizen could be using. Of course this is a distortion of the truth. When the Basic Education Opportunity Grant was created well over forty years ago, it was to be issued on as needed bases(Pell Grant for Prisoners). Although the there has been countless attempts to provide cost efficient education for inmates, nothing has been as successful as the Pell Grant. Inmates in American prison systems began completing Associate degree programs as well as Bachelors programs. After President Reagan announced his war on drugs, many drug dealer began to received stiffer penalties in court. Drug dealers were being sentenced to twenty five year terms for their participation in the drug trade. However, these extended terms did not stop these individuals from pursuing higher learning. Those who were bold enough to purse a college education did so with the help of the Pell Grant. The Pell grant was awarded to inmates as well as low income families(Pell Grant for Prisoners). Again, the idea of an individual who sold crack for a living, receiving a free education at tax payers’ expense was more than many conservatives could bear. One after another Senators and State Representatives made their declaration against inmates receiving the Pell Grant. Starting with Senator Jesse Helms in 1991, law maker began a anti education campaign for inmates. In1991, Senator Jesse Helms, introduce his theory on who Pell Grant money was unfairly being disbursed to inmates rather than low income tax payers and their children. This speech ignited the spark for more attempts at excluding prison inmates for the Pell Grant. Following Senator Helms was Representative Thomas Coleman. Representative Coleman shared Senator Helms revulsion for inmates receiving the Pell Grant. In 1992 Representative Coleman claimed that more than 90,000 inmates unrightfully received Pell Grant funds(Pell Grants for Prisoners). During 1993 Kay B. Hutchison furiously announced that more than 200 million dollars were being awarded to state prisons for inmate education programs. Following Senator Hutchison with just as much venom was Congressmen Timothy Holden. Senator Holden appeared on C-SPAN announcing that he was appalled to learn that inmates were receiving federal funds to obtain college degrees. He stated that a program that was designed to assist low income families should not assist individuals in prison(Pell Grants for Prisoners). Senator after Senator made their stand against education in prison. By 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was in effect. In September of 1994, Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act(The Clinton Record). The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was the largest in United States history. It was three hundred and sixty five pages and covered four crucial points. First the law addressed assault weapons, then the federal death penalty, next, elimination of inmate education and finally violence against women(The Clinton Record). There are a number of other previous; however the banning of education in prison was a bad call. The elimination of education for inmates was one of the most controversial previsions because it over turned a section of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Who would have thought that congress would go through the motions to overturn laws to prevent inmates from receiving an education? This act alone gives clear evidence of the resentment that many American felt toward prison education programs. By abolishing the chance of inmates to receiving federal grants, the law also prevented inmates from improving their educational level. This was a devastating blow to the American prison system. Although the supporters of this law felt that they had won, the American people lost. The passing of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act did not save tax payers money by eliminating education in prison. The fact is that this law cost tax payers more money. After the financial aid expulsion, the population of prison increased at a steady pace. Now rather than having a large number of minorities improving themselves through education, you now have a larger number of educationally, economically, and socially disadvantage preparing to re-enter into society. What happens when you allow these individuals to re-enter into society(Pell Grants for Prisoners)? The answer is recidivism.

Recidivism is a person repeating an undesirable behavior after they have already spent time in prison or have been treated or trained to extinguish that behavior according to the Webster Dictionary. Recidivism is simply repeat offending. The recidivism rate is defined as a measurement of the rate at which offenders commit other crimes, either by arrest or conviction baselines, after being released from incarceration(LAWBRAIN). According to the Bureau of Justice, over 90 percent of all prisoners will be released back into society at one point or another. Findings from the US Department of Justice state that most of the individuals incarcerated and released back into society are minorities male. These individuals are uneducated and low income and over half of them will reenter prison within a three year of their release date(Department of Justice). The director of the Massachusetts Mental Health Service reported that there are a number of anti-recidivism programs available, however, the most effective program allowed inmates to receive a college degree while in prison. The director went on to report that inmates who completed a baccalaureate degree while in prison had a recidivism rate of zero percent. For those inmates who did not receive a degree the recidivism rates within three years of release was fifty five percent. Based on these results, education in prison is directly responsible for reduced recidivism. The inmate who completes a degreed programmed positively impact their life as well as the community(Education in Prison). America continues to build new prison throughout the country. Despite the failure of American prison systems, Americans are sending more people to prison than ever before. As a result of the failing war on drugs, over the past twenty years, America has experienced one of the largest expansions in its jail, prison and community correctional populations in history(Blank Slate 2006). Although there are countless studies on the impact of education on the rate of recidivism, there are individuals in prison who will never be fit for release back into society. No amount of education will correct the issues that the large majority of violent criminals face. The term violent criminal is used to describe rapist, murders, child molesters, ect. But for those individuals who truly want an education, they should be encouraged to do so. The recidivism rate of educated prisoners as opposed to those who have little on education clearly exposes a problem. The problem is that seven out of ten parolees will return to prison unless some form of education and or therapy program is available. The Bureau of Justice conducted a fifteen state study to provide the national recidivism rate for the United States. The findings are consistent with the Massachusetts Mental Health Study as it relates to recidivism. In 1983 The Bureau of Justice tracked 108,580 State prisoners released from prison in 11 States. Then in 1994, 272,111 prisoners were tracked after being released from 15 state prison. Two thirds f all the prisoners released in the United states for that year is what the prisoners that were tracked represent(Bureau of Justice2010). According to the study, three years after released in 1994, over 67% of prisoners were rearrested. This was a significant increase from those released in 1983. From 1983 to 1994, the rearrest rate increased significantly for property offenders, drug offenders, as well as public order offenders. The arrest rate for property offenders rose from 68.1% to 73%. The arrest rates for drug offenders went from 59.4% to 66.7% during the study. Public-order offenders increased from 54.6% to 62.2% ( Bureau of Justice2010). The recidivism rate according to this study is extremely high when there is little to n educational programs available for prisoners. As a result, the majority of those released found themselves back in prison for new offences, parole or probation violations. Again, there is a population of inmates who are not fit to renter society but have a recidivism rate that is extremely high. These individual are commonly called Psychopaths. No amount of college or treatment will cure or rehabilitate a psychopath. It is unfortunate that of all the violent criminals, psychopaths are twice as likely to be released from jail although it is highly likely that they will violate the law. Behavior modification techniques and punishment do not have a positive effect on them. These individuals are considered to be masters at manipulation as well as disguising their true feelings. Psychopaths are incurable as well as untreatable(Without a Conscience1995). Unlike other criminals, psychopaths do not rationalize consequences of their action the same way everyone else in the world does. They are sometimes educated, well spoken and also possess charming personalities. That is the real problem. They appear to be normal; therefore it is easy for them to victimize others. For example serial killers like Ted Bundy, seemed completely normal. More frightening is that psychopaths understand the difference between right and wrong, however they still choose to do what is wrong. They are also able to control their behaviors. The issue is that knowing the consequences of their action is not a deterrent(Without a Conscience1995). Compared to other offenders the recidivism rate of psychopaths is twice a high. More frightening is the violent recidivism rate of psychopaths. It is about triple that of other offenders according to numerous studies(Without a Conscience 1995). As a result of these findings the criminal justice system is showing an interest in education, recidivism, psychopaths, and violence. It is important to remember that there are countless numbers of prisoners that are undiagnosed psychopaths. These individuals will return to society at some point as well. It is also important to keep in mind that there is no rehabilitation in prison nor is there any treatment in prison for anyone. American prison must find a way to properly diagnose an inmate before rehabilitation can occur. How can you fix it, if you are sure what is broken. The American correction system is broken in a few places. These broken places also account for the increasing rate of recidivism. The American people measure the effectiveness of prisons by rates of recidivism. However, no one takes into account the number of challenges an offender faces upon release. There are a number of barriers that an offender must overcome in order to successfully renter society. Although an offender is out of prison they are not completely free. In many cases they may have to be monitored by a parole officer or probation officer. There are also a number of restrictions that an offender will now have to face. The right to vote as well as the right to hold public office may be stripped away(). This right can only be restored after an offender has completed their sentence or after being discharge from parole. The right to vote is on of the single most important rights for all Americans, and it is the most notable civil disability of ex-prisoner. Research supports that if felons had been allowed to Vote in the 2000 elections, Al Gore would have won the presidency(American corrections). Civil disabilities are not the only issues that plague convicted felons. They also have to accept a life time ban from food stamps and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families(TANF-child welfare) , if they wer convicted of a drug related felony. Returning felons may also be refused public housing or evict from public housing if arrested for a drug related charge. During 1992 federal law withheld a portion of highway funds until states agreed to suspend drivers licenses of people convicted of a drug crime. Some states have even bared convicted felons from adopting and even participating in Foster care. Finally the worst ban of them all, the Higher Education Act of 1998. The Higher Education Act of 1998 makes students convicted of drug related crimes ineligible for grants, loans, or work assistance to support college(American Correction). Not only do offenders have to reenter society as a second class citizen with their basic civil rights stripped, they must also have to re enter society penniless, and homeless. In many cases these individual return with nowhere to live, no job, no transportation, no money, no education and no marketable skills. This is a recipe for disaster. The stigma of conviction partnered with the civil limitations that offenders have to live under can be devastating. The legal hurdles to employment that all offenders face cause anger and frustration. Many states throughout the US have laws in place that prohibit ex offenders from receiving occupational licenses(American Corrections). Courts continue to uphold these bans, even after the offenders completed job training programs become employable. These law are just another type of exclusion from society. The American people want prison to rehabilitate criminal so that they can become a productive part of society. However the American people are not will to provide ex offenders with the proper tools to become successful citizens. For example, prison throughout the United States offers Barber Classes. Nevertheless, ex offenders are barred from receiving Barber licenses. Barber, cosmetologist, teaching, and nursing licenses are also restricted to ex offenders. In some cases, ex offenders may find themselves bared for jobs they held before going to prison. For some offenders employment can mean the difference between re entry and freedom. Once an offender is released their debt to society is not yet paid. They are still responsible for pay fees that are associated with their parole. If the commitments to pay are not met, the ex offenders will find themselves in violation of their parole. Parole violation in any form or fashion will result in re entry. This type of re entry is an example of how ineffectiveness the correctional system really is. An ex offender who has committed no crime and has been unsuccessful at finding employment is arrested for non-payment of parole fees. The options for ex offenders are very limited. The majority of well paying jobs, unless you’re Martha Stewart, are reserved for individuals with clean criminal back grounds. Employers are hesitant to hire ex offenders, especially those with violence on their back ground. Civil service regulation also bar ex offender from employment. An ex offender can be denied employment from state and federal jobs. A prior arrest that and even a juvenile record can led to employment rejection when allying for state or federal jobs. According to a study conducted by the Bureau of Justice, prison terms regardless of how short the term, damages an ex offers chances of finding employment. In order for ex offense to re enter society and become a productive part of it, there some things that must change. To successful reduce the rates of recidivism, the correctional system as a whole has to adopt new processes and procedures for offenders serving time and as well as those preparing to return to society.

Reentry may look like a failing situation with little hope for success, but there are a number of thing that can be improved to help with reentry. Ex offenders must have support immediately upon release from prison. Support can be represented as food shelter and clothing. These are primitive needs that all humans share. Beyond primitive needs there needs to be a transition process. Inmates who have less than a year on their prison sentence should enter a transition program. This program can be within or out of the prison walls, but it needs to offer professional development, work release programs, and family re entry assistance. In many case these offenders have been socialized to prison life. They have to be taught to communicate outside of prison effectively. They will also need help preparing a resume or filling out job application as well as interviewing techniques. An inmate who has been in jail for the past twelve years many not realize that most companies no longer accepts paper applications. The offender must be computer literate in order to complete an application in this day and age. Getting a job truly is the most important step of a successful release. A job fuels a productive release and decreases the chances of reentry. Employment helps to keep ex offenders mind and hands occupied. A person can take time that was once spent hanging with the wrong people in the wrong places into spending it in a more positive way. Next, an ex offender will need assistance with reentering their family. After a twelve year prison sentence, it is not hard to lose touch with family and friends. Life outside of the prison wall continues for loved ones. Family member, such as wives, husbands and children may be reluctant to see the offender or have contact with them. A social worker could easily assist with the transition back into family by setting up monitored visits prior to release. A social work could help ex offender with developing some type of dialog with their loved ones especially their children. Rebuilding family ties and finding community support are a key element of reducing reentry rates but it is not enough. Some offenders will require some additional help. Although, American would like to believe that people in prison can n longer commit crime like rape, selling drugs and worst using drugs, this is just not true. American prisons are filled with offenders who sell dugs in prison and even use drugs in prison. Unfortunately these offenders do not receive the rehabilitation that in needed to adjust to life outside of prison. Ex offenders with drug and alcohol problems are really in high risk repeat offending. For these individuals to be successful they must receive treatment, and treatment for the correction system means random drug testing(American Corrections). Newly released offenders will be subjected to drug test without notice on a regular basis. Therefore, these ex offender have to completely change their lives if they intend to remain free. They must cut all ties with old friend who still abuse drugs and even family members who abuse drugs. The can no longer frequent their old hang out. They must find a new drug free way to live in order to enjoy life outside of the prison walls. Finally, offenders need to redefine themselves. The must find a sense of “who I am”. Ex offenders must change the way they view themselves as well as the way others view them(American Corrections). In order to be successful, offenders must be granted education in prison. The education must be in a field that will be marketable upon release. There is really no sense in training an inmate to become an Emergency Medical Technician, knowing their application for employment will be rejected. This practice has to be stopped. Offenders must have some form of support in the community as well as in the prison to assist with job placement. Offenders must have some sense of family of community tie to help cope. Many offenders return to prison because they are unable to cope with the many adversities they face. They have no coping skill and as a result they violate their parole and are re arrested. A relapse is the direct result of ex offender lacking the skills to deal with the problems that they face. They fall back into their old routine, their comfort zone. They begin to frequent their old hang outs, and send time with their old acquaintances. This is a spiraling down process and is the first step to recidivism(American Correction). A relapse process according to the American Justice text book, occurs when an ex offenders poor decision makes adjustment problems worse, leading eventually to recidivism. Nationwide only half of parolees successfully complete their parole terms, there are now program being put in place to help with the problem.

Recognizing these problems, President Bush addresses the issued in his State of the Union speech in 2004. In 2004, President Bush proposed “a four year, $300 million prison re entry initiative to expand job training and placement services, to provide transitional housing and to help newly released prisoners get mentoring, including from faith based groups(Department f Justice). In some states the employer may be given incentives to hire a convicted felon in the form of cash, tax credits, or fidelity bonds. Federal probation officers are making their rounds to speak to business owners’ throughout the United States. They are informing business owners of the incentives available to them for hiring a convicted felon. Business owners who hire convicted felons can receive tax credits and temporary insurance. Tax credits can be awarded up to $2,400 for every newly released offender added to a company’s payroll. The Federal bond program offers free insurance against losses up to $5,000 if employee commits a crime against his employer(Department of Justice). The Work Opportunity Tax Credit(WOTC) is easy for employers to use. Employers are still able to select the new employee that they find qualified. There is no limit on the number of ex offenders that an employer can hire. The only thing he employer must do is file the appropriate tax papers to claim a tax credit(Department of Justice). To assist with job placement there are a number of websites for felons seeking employment. Although ex offenders face more challenges than helping, there are new programs being developed to help with the transition process.

The American prison system obviously has it flaws, however laws are in place and more are going before the President to correct some of the wrong. Prison is designed to do one thing and that keep criminal off the streets. It keeps criminal off the streets and is suppose to deter people from committing crimes. This is where the real problems come into play. On one hand prison does work it, if your caging a serial killer like John Wayne Gracy. Offenders like John Wayne Gracy is leading cause of the recent growth spurts in the American Prison system. Americans were tired of being prisoners in their homes and communities. Americans demanded results from their elected officials. In 1986 President Ronald Reagan delivered his idea of results. The Posse Comitatus Act was passed in 1986 as part of President Reagan’s War on Drugs Campaign. Reagan’s administration directs Department of Defense to use naval assets o beyond the borders of the United States to combat drug smuggling. However, Reagan’s administration did not stop there. They even allowed the use of military force in civilian areas, immigration control and traffic enforcement(Criminology Today). Reagan also delivered mandatory minimums--statutory requirements for harsh sentences for certain offenses, such as gun and drug-related crimes(Dpatment of Justice).

The three stikes laws were passed in 1990. These laws were drafted to combat or deter repeat felons. They also targeted truth in sentencing legislation, and te abolition of parole in man states. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the percentage of violent offenders in state prisons had decreased significantly by 1980. It had dropped almost 60%. At the end of 1999 the percentage of violent offenders in state prisons was 48%. Worst is that only 21% were in prison in 1999 for property crimes, 21% for drug crimes, and the rest for public-order offenses, such as immigration, vice, or weapons violations(Bureau of Justice). In the federal system, drug offenders made up 45% of the growth from 1980 to 1996. What this indicates is that the majority on inmates are non-violent offenders who are serving sentences up to twenty years. More people were sentenced to prison for drug offenses than for violent crimes every year from 1990 through 1997(Bureau of Justice). These types are laws are easily passed when society wants results. Quick results to problems that developed over time has had devastating effects on the American prison system. Many American democrats would like to present this as a result of Reagan war on drugs, however, nothing could be further from the truth. Bill Clinton left behind a legacy of his own. He can easily was and still is America’s incarceration President. In 1994, Clinton signed the Violent Crime Act and Law Enforcement Act. These act helped to fund state and federal prison construction projects. In 1995 states spent $2.6 billion building new prisons. The United States was spending more money on building prisons than on building universities(). During Clintons Presidency the number of Americans in federal prisons doubled. By the end of 1999, the Clinton Administration had already exceeded the Reagan and Bush Administrations with a federal incarceration rate of 42 per 100,000. This is the rate at which Clinton ended his popular Presidency. The man of the people was a man of prison and mandatory sentencing(). Bill Clinton repeatedly stated that education would be a priority during his Pesidency, however his real passion was within the criminal justice system. During his presidency no one in or out of prison was receiving the educational support this country so desperately needs. Inmates were not receiving funds to continue higher education nor were schools and universities receiving the appropriate funding they required. Just when American inmates thought that all hope was lost, George W. Bush signed the second chance law in 2007(Talk Left). The Second Chance Act was created to provide support services for prisoners re-entering society. The act authorizes $165 million in spending per year, matched grants to state and local governments and nongovernmental groups to explore nontraditional option to aid with housing, employment and the building of family and community ties after release(Talk Left). The act directs the Justice Department to increase research on the issue of reentry. This is exactly the kind of action that our community leaders and elected officials should be taking. In the Fiscal year of 2009, $15 million were awarded to state and local reentry demonstration projects. During the same year $10 million was awarded to nonprofit organizations for mentoring and other traditional services(Justice Center). In the Fiscal year 2010, $14 million for reentry initiatives was awarded in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and $100 million for Second Chance Act grant programs to nonprofit organizations for mentoring and other traditional services(Justice Center). The funds awarded for the fiscal year of 2011 for the Second Chance Act grant program totaled $100 million. This act will help to ensure that postsecondary education for inmates is available. There are grants that focus strictly on Career Training. For example, Technology Careers Training Demonstration Grants ($5,000,000), was created to develop training programs for offenders no more than three years from release. The program also assist with finding jobs in higher paying, technical fields(CDFA). As stated earlier, ex offenders will require assistance with finding jobs in the fields they are trained in. And for those offenders with drug and alcohol problems, the Offender Reentry Substance Abuse and Criminal Justice Collaboration is prepared to help. Offender Reentry Substance Abuse and Criminal Justice Collaboration will receive $13,000,000 in grant funds to develop treatment programs to address the needs of ex offenders with a history of drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health issues(CDFA). Again there are a number of grants awarded to assist with reentry, therefore they are noted. However, one of the most impressive or most supportive is the Adult and Juvenile Demonstration. The Ault and Juvenile Demonstration was awarded $37,000,000 to promote the safe and successful reintegration into the community of ex offenders. the funds can be used to establish mentorships, housing, education and job training. The funds may also used for college, family planning, initiatives addressing victim priorities and restorative justice, research to improve the effectiveness of release and revocation decisions using risk assessment tools, and reentry court programs(DCFA). In order for reentry program to be effective, law makers must understand the importance of education in prison. According to a study conducted by the Bureau of Prisons, inmates who participated in educational programs inside the prison, such as vocational training and mock job fairs significantly reduced recidivism or repetition of criminal behavior patterns(Education in Prison).

There are countless reasons as to why inmates should not only be allowed to pursue education but should be encouraged to continue their education. Society’s welfare is positively impacted when inmates become educated. Of course everything boils down to dollars and cents. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss prison without discussing the cost of prison. Whenever offenders are allowed to pursue higher education it saves tax payers money. For every dollar spent on education more than two dollars are returned to American tax payers. Accordin to a Rand study, education is the most effective cost effective crime prevention plan available(The Prison Scholar Fund). One of the most telling studies was completed on four states. Alabama, Mrayland, New York, and Texas were the center of a study on recidivism of degreed ex offenders as compared to non-degreed offenders. The recidivism rate for Alabama is 35% fo non degreed offenders and 1% fr those offenders with college degrees. In Maryland the rate of recidivism for those without a degree is 40% and the rate for those with college degrees is 0%. In New York, the recidivism rate was 45% for those without a degree. For those with degrees the rate was 26%. The recidivism rate for inmates without degrees in Texas was 36 %. For those inmates without degrees the rate was 10%(The Prison Scholar Funds). The findings of this study offers results from four different states and the finding are the same. The reduced rate of recidivism is directly related to the availability education in prison. The Bureau of Prison’s mission statement which reads: “The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) protects society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and that provide work and other self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens(Prison Education).” One element of the “self-improvement opportunities” is education. Completion of a General education program or better a college degree sends a positive indicator to potential employers. Completing a educational program while in prison, indicates the the ex offender has the ability to complete work. Education in prison is a win-win situation for the ex offender as well as society. If nothing else this document does demonstrates a relationship between education, incarceration, arrest rates, and recidivism rates. Education is the key to ending prison overcrowding, high arrest rates and even higher recidivism rates. Once America accepts fully the connection between crime and education, crime may become preventable as well as manageable. An excellent deterrent for fist time offenders would start as early as elementary school. Crimes among juveniles usually take place between the hours of 3pm and 6pm. These are the key latch kids who are home alone are rather out committing a crime. Parents can not help it if they are forced to work extended hours or even multiples jobs to take care of their families. They should not be penalized for have to work harder to make ends meet. Rather charge parents with the crimes that their child commits, which is what is happening in many states throughout the US, parent should be offered free after school care. The same funding that makes it possible for prisoner to attend college could also help prevent children from committing crimes. Teachers are currently under paid in most cases, therefore those teachers who wanted to make extra money could work after school with children who need help. This could improve the quality of life for all parties involved. Parents would have after school care without a fee and teachers could increase their income without adding a second job. Education can be used across the board to prevent crime, beginning with American children. The majority American have grasp the concept of higher education and freedom. For example, over 80% of Asian-Americans complete high school and enter into college. Following them are 78% of white Americans. In nearly last place is African Americans with 55% completing high school. With the large majority of American prisons being occupied by African Americans, one can surely recognized the need for education in corrections. The saddest point of this is that if African Americans along with Hispanic Americans, do not receive educational opportunities in prison, they will not be afforded to them. They will be mandated by law to live a less than productive life. Society must deal with offenders appropriately while they are in prison are be forced to deal with them in car-jackings, bank robberies, home invasions or violent attacks. One way or another, societ will have to deal with its potential criminals and criminals.

Rehabilitation is not effectively happening in American prison today; however changes are being made for the better. The signing of the Second Chance Act, was the first step in a very long time, in the right direction. Just saying education is available is not enough. Americans must ensure that pogroms are in place and that there is an efficient way to measure the effectiveness of the program. An ineffective education program is just as bad a no education program. The decision to return to crime is not one that is made lightly when consider the condition of correctional institutions. Who would want to go back to prison? What would prompt someone to risk returning back to prison. The answer is an individual with nothing to lose. This individual has no education or marketable skills and could not support himself without criminal activity. Although the quote crime doesn’t pay sounds catchy, in actuality, crime does pay, even if it is temporary, crime will keep the heat on. For ex offender with limited skills those are the terms under which they operate. The correctional system must make it mandatory for inmates to seek higher education or some type of vocational skill. Inmates should not be allowed to socialize or meditate during their entire stay. Education or vocational school should be a condition of their release. For those inmates who chose not to participate in educational programs, there should not be any release or parole, especially for violent criminals because without a doubt they’ll be back. Making education a priority in prison will forever change the way Americans view ex offenders and the correctional system. The American prison system may truly become a vehicle for positive change. Positive change is the goal of all prison system. The ability to change a person for the better is exactly what prisons will do as long as education is the driving force. Education can affect the outcome of an offender’s life providing them with better option than committing yet another crime. Better option will in turn have an positive impact n the recitative rate. For those who are opposed to education in prison, what is in place now has not worked for a very long time. What would the American people lose if education in prison fails? Surely it’s no tax dollars because billions of tax payers’ dollars have already been spent thus far of prisons. Americans must exhaust every avenue to correct the damage that has already been done. Education in prison is not a finally answer but one of man options.

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