Education in the Jails: Building a Foundation for the Future

Presenter’s Contact information:

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Objectives

Participants will learn:

- The history, partnerships, and challenges of the educational system at the King County Jails
- What it’s like to tutor at the jail: training, challenges, rewards
Agenda

1. Intros/Overview & Objectives
2. Turn & Talk: What’s the difference between a jail & a prison
3. Overview of the Education System at the Jail: Who and what do we teach?
4. Who’s Involved? Partner Organizations at the Jail
5. Education in the Jail: Challenges
6. Pair & Share: What characteristics are important for tutoring in the jail?
7. Training Tutors: What’s involved, and why it’s difficult
8. Panel Introductions
9. Questions for the panelists
10. Q&A
Introductions

- Name, and why did you decide to attend this presentation?
- For me:

"Jails and prisons are the complement of schools: so many less as you have of the latter, so many more must you have of the former."
Turn & Talk

• What is the difference between a jail and a prison?
  • Length of stay
  • Awaiting trial or serving short sentences
  • Who’s in control: city/county vs state/federal
  • Generally more educational opportunities in a prison
Overview of Education System at the King County Jail

- King County Correctional Facility (Minimum/Medium)
  - Men’s ESL Class (5 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s ABE Class (10 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s GED Class (10 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s GED/ESL Class (10 hrs/wk)

- Maleng Regional Justice Center (Medium Only)
  - Women’s GED Class (5 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s GED Class (10 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s GED/ABE Class (10 hrs/wk)
  - Men’s GED/ESL Class (10 hrs/wk)
Seattle Central offers instruction, coordination, and weekly GED testing.

Educational Partners at the Jail

Literacy Source tutor coordinator facilitates a seminar for UW students via the UW Pipeline Program, students tutor at KCCF.

Literacy Source provides tutor support (~15 at KCCF, 5 at RJC) and coordination as well as training.
Education in the Jails: Challenges

Turn & Talk: What are some challenges that you would expect in the educational environment at a jail? (Two facets: Students & Environment)

• Students:
  • Are going through traumatic events in their lives
  • Have often historically had negative experiences with education
  • May have learning differences, traumatic brain injuries, former substance use, regulation of meds

• Environment:
  • Safety and Security is paramount and always takes precedent
  • Purpose of the jail is antithetical to the purpose of education
  • Transitional facility so frequent/unpredictable movement
Pair & Share

• What are some personality traits that you think would make it easier for a tutor to succeed in the jail?

- Dedicated
- Empathetic
- Patient
- Flexible
- Creative
- Realistic
Tutor Training: What’s involved

- Waiting List
- Phone Screen
- In-Person Interview: Paperwork for LS & King County
- Safety & Security Orientation Video
- Tutor Training: How to tutor effectively in the jail
- 10 hours of Literacy Source training in the first year
Tutor Training: Why it’s difficult

- Long time between initial interest and getting started
- Difficult to explain a jail situation without scaring people off
- Additional layer of training beyond tutoring: How to navigate/manage the jail environment.
- No accommodations for special needs (e.g. walking canes, translators, insulin pumps)
Tutoring at the jail: Why it’s rewarding

“Making the Impossible Possible”: We are reaching one of the most difficult to reach populations

Students are opting for this service, it is a privilege

Often tangible, life-changing results: GED scores, graduation ceremonies

Tutors and teachers are frequently giving students the first positive educational experience they’ve had

We are hitting students at a critical juncture as many of them will be released soon
Tutoring at the jail: Why it’s rewarding
Panel Discussion

Introductions:

- Who are you?
- How long have you been working/tutoring at the jail?
- What made you want to join the educational team at the jail?