



CASE STUDY

High Desert State Prison

Dan Andrews- math teacher and chess coach

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What is your Design Challenge?

Students have been unsuccessful in the educational program up to this point and are running into many roadblocks in their learning endeavors and support systems. Our research has shown that 62 % of incoming inmates have less than a High School education. Only 23% have earned a High School Diploma. Public schools' traditional teaching techniques are not working for these individuals. Many variables contribute to this failure, such as environment, substance and personal abuse, neglect, and lack of early childhood education. There has been a discontinuity due to numerous disruptions in educational programming, causing students to be unable to attend class. The student inmates have no idea what happens to them when they wake up each day; there is no consistency in the programming schedule.

This leads to stress and inefficiencies in teaching and learning. The education program is not close to being optimized.

High Desert was the first correctional institution in the United States to utilize the North American building Trades MC-3 apprenticeship Readiness Program. In 2018, three graduates from our Apprenticeship Readiness Program presented their testimony before the Nevada Legislature regarding the success of the program at High Desert State Prison and the benefits of apprenticeship training. All three graduates were accepted into registered apprenticeship programs. We wondered how we could change the existing education programs in all areas that could result in similar successes to those in the MC-3 apprenticeship Readiness Program.

How might we make the students self-motivated learners? Our first challenge is planting the seed that education will lead to success outside prison. More than half of our enrollment has not had productive education experiences. Many of our staff members are frustrated and lack the energy they once had. We are setting a goal to re-energize these staff members. We are in the first phase of this transition, and we know that change comes with patience and time.

Artifact #1: Quotes from students at High Desert High School

"I've never had anyone praise me before on my work." "I never had the confidence to complete this work." And "This isn't so bad; I can do it!" (Previous students). In his graduation speech, a student speaker said, "Education is our key to breaking through the manacles of illiteracy, and we will not allow chains of ignorance to restrain us from our destiny."

What did you do?

There has been a discontinuity due to numerous disruptions in educational programming, causing students to be unable to attend class. The student inmates have no idea what happens to them when they wake up each day; there is no consistency in the programming schedule. This leads to stress and inefficiencies in teaching and learning. The education program is not close to being optimized.

We empower students through critical thinking and solution-oriented attributes with our students. For example, in the MC-3 Apprenticeship Readiness Program, students are exposed to the reality that their application of knowledge, both prior and yet to be learned, will positively impact their lives, their families, and their community. Most of the instructors throughout the school are now emphasizing goal setting. We ask, "Where do you want to be in five years?"

Vocational classes stress time management as a key to completing projects, thus implementing the solution-oriented competency. This fall, we plan to create a "student educational committee" that will provide insight and direction to our staff. When we empower our students, we give them a sense of value that is not typical in their present lives. Through their skill development, the students can self-advocate for themselves when working toward job placement once released. We encourage students to analyze goals and prioritize tasks to manage time that effectively connects with inmates' decisions regarding going to class or working out. "Engage their curiosity and perspectives about diverse matters to guide their

learning and defend their decisions" also speaks to the challenges inmates face in selecting, completing the school program, or making other choices.

We have also decided to develop self-motivation among our students by working on our rapport as educators so our school runs smoothly as colleagues and friends and be more cohesive and team-building activities.

We have to present more opportunities for students to want to learn and be more successful. To reduce recidivism, the Nevada Department Of Corrections (NDOC) 's legacy mindset needs to incorporate more programs that demonstrate the value in education. Education needs to be prioritized by facilitating programs and working with NDOC leadership.

The image shows a weekly sign-in sheet for Teacher: Maloy, Period: 2. The sheet is divided into four columns representing the days of the week: Monday, 3.25.24; Tuesday, 3.26.24; Wednesday, 3.27.24; and Thursday, 3.28.24. The rows represent individual students, with names partially visible: ises, el, ry, llip, chael, von, uel, s, and iel. Each of the four days has a vertical pink line drawn through the column, and the word "Lockdown" is written vertically in black marker across each of these lines.

Student Name	Monday, 3.25.24	Tuesday, 3.26.24	Wednesday, 3.27.24	Thursday, 3.28.24
ises	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
el	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
ry	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
llip	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
chael	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
von	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
uel	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
s	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown
iel	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown	Lockdown

Artifact #2: Attached is a weekly sign-in sheet for the students this year. Lockdowns can go on for a few hours or a few days, depending on the severity of the lockdown and its reason. If we are on lockdown for more than a day. Teachers begin organizing, and we send out packets to students so they don't fall behind in their work. We also go down to the units to administer final exams and tests if the students are not able to come to school.

Lockdowns can last as long as 21 days. The traditional semester timeline that our administration insists on is thrown out of whack. We are asked to submit grades before the necessary learning is accomplished. Starting in the fall, we will initiate a system where grades and certificates will be awarded after completing the 36 days of instruction. Each class will meet with students twice a week for 3.5 hours daily. That will allow us 126 hours of hands-on and instructional time. Each student will be required to perform a knowledge-based examination.

What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation? What was the impact?

Remember that we are still in the infant stages of bringing about change in an institution that resists change. The NDOC has priority to keep everyone safe. The Clark County School District (CCSD) is the fifth-largest school district in the United States and struggles with day-to-day operations. As with all

districts, funding is an issue. The 2023-24 school year has been very violent. It has also been a year since the institution converted to a maximum security status with the redistribution of inmates throughout the state. We are hopeful that redistribution will result in stabilization. Despite everything, we did have a successful graduation in May. Over 60 students received diplomas and HiSet certifications. Some family members were able to attend the graduation and witness these achievements.

We're still in the planning stages of this implementation and are working on seamless coordination between CCSD and the NDOC. Implementing programs is laborious due to the entrenched bureaucracy of CCSD and NDOC and the disruption of student learning. The school leadership team and the Department of Corrections can be more directive in maintaining standards and accountability for staff. Staff also need to accept their responsibilities and take ownership of improving outcomes.

What was the greatest success? How did this success impact young people or how might it impact young people on your campus? What are their perceptions?

Our greatest success is having 30 students graduate this year with their high school diplomas. Since the pandemic, our graduation numbers and student involvement have declined. The prison has had several leadership changes, which have made education a non-priority. We are at the mercy of the warden's mindset.

We also organized a chess tournament for the students, consisting of multi-racial and crossed-racial lines, to compete in a strategic game competition. The tournament gave the students something to look forward to for weeks and brought satisfaction and a sense of completion. Their tenacious collaborative attitudes were rewarded after the event with a nice lunch, a certificate, and a chess magazine to recognize their success and hard work. This not only motivated them to work with each other, but it allowed them to feel a sense of community and value in being positively recognized.

What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?

As adult learners, what is shifting about your mindset about empowering young people with voice, agency, and influence in your classroom?

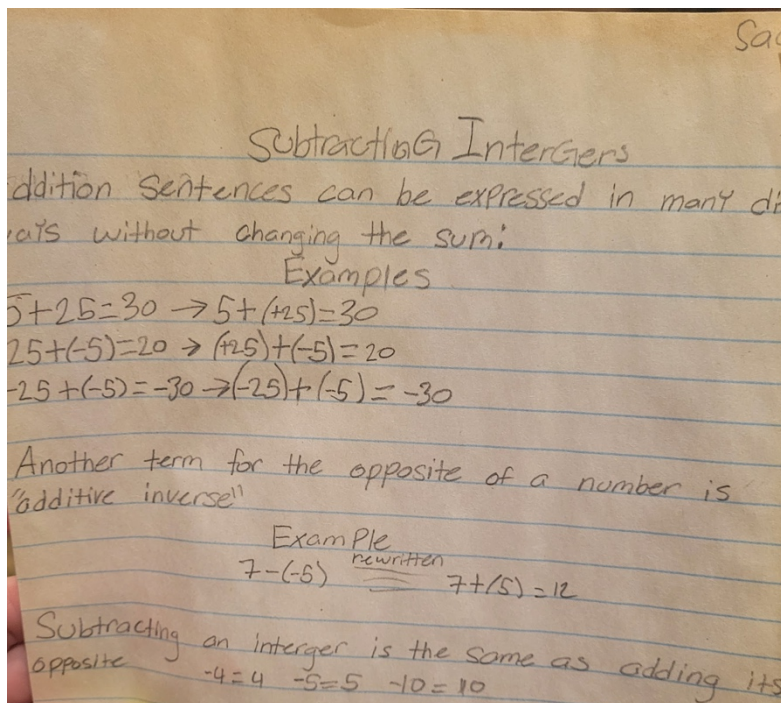
We are helping shift students' mindsets, giving them confidence and avenues to success, and enabling them to take control of their lives.

Assessing the advancement of our changes is difficult because we are just getting started. We can state that many of our colleagues are buying into our renewed energy and are willing to adapt their learning structure and encourage critical thinking in students.

We need to encourage rethinking and dissuade the silo mentality which is currently entrenched. Teacher interaction with other teachers is a key for us moving forward.

Course final exams and HiSET testing are key factors to student success. Vocation uses hands-on demonstrations to prove competencies and earn certificates through self motivated and driven coursework which is solution oriented. Teachers assist with reading comprehension during exams and scaffold students' past IEP and 504 learning accommodations. Students must be accountable for their own learning and performance. Cheating is an addiction and habit that must be closely monitored to help students demonstrate their proficiency levels.

Artifact: The picture below shows math student goals after the team initiated the Portrait to motivate them to attend class. Now, students are continuing to set goals and take work back with them to further their education.



Research + Resources that inspired and informed our thinking

Participating in the network has brought collaboration efforts amongst our team. Three schools (adults, teenagers, and vocational training) have come together to work on what is best for our students. We get a different perspective by evaluating how others do the same job with the same challenges.

We're looking forward to the changes and ideas we've considered and to bringing this underrecognized group of adult learners to the attention of our school and community.

We have also joined the Corrections Education Association to join forces with other prison educators to learn how to serve our students better.

By attending the Mountain Plains Adult Education Association conference this year, we connected with other school districts in correctional settings. We discovered that we share many of the same problems, such as funding and understaffing. We also discovered an organization of adult teachers within a corrections setting that will allow us to network and share questions and solutions. We also had the opportunity to meet vendors that could eventually assist us in updating our curriculums.

<https://www.mackinac.org/>

<https://bjs.ojp.gov/employment-state-and-federal-prisoners-prior-incarceration-2016>

<https://nces.ed.gov/>

<https://doc.nv.gov/>