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## Beyond Repentance: Career and Technical Educators Give Prisoners the Means to Truly Change Their Lives

by Gemma McLuckie

This article on CETE's Susan Nell was originally published in *Inspire: A Publication for Alumni and Friends of The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology*, 2010, 6-10, and is reprinted here with permission.

The original *Inspire* article also contains photos and some interesting sidebars on reentry and parenting dads behind

bars. (Most of the pullout quotes here are photo captions from the original article.) To see the original article, go to <http://ehe.osu.edu/publications/downloads/ehe-inspire-2010.pdf>

Coming over a rise on a two-lane road in northeastern Ohio, travelers are confronted by a stunning sight—a huge stone castle that for almost 100 years was the Mansfield Reformatory. It was designed, historians say, “to encourage inmates back to a ‘rebirth’ of their spiritual lives... to turn away from their sinful lifestyle and toward repentance.”

How that sight must have struck terror into the hearts of the men sentenced to spend years there.

Just to the east is a modern building, a low-slung rectangle of no particular architectural note. Its purpose is not as obvious, until rolls of razor wire glint in the sun. This is the Richland Correctional Institution, a prison holding 2,500 men in no-nonsense, two-story block housing at the edge of a treeless, 10-acre lawn.

Inside low buildings on the opposite edge, a cadre of educators spend their days encouraging inmates in a rebirth of a

different sort—a move into a more promising future. They are the career and technical teachers, many of whom are very aware of the power of transfor-

mation. After all, they chose to move from the world of business into the profession of education.

“I have an associate degree in culinary arts,” said Tom Oswalt, who leads the commercial baking program. He was in business for 15 years, but “this is one of the most interesting jobs I’ve ever had. It has its trials and tribulations, but it’s unique.”

*“I’m always trying to improve my teaching” says commercial baking teacher Tom Oswalt. The college’s Route B licensure program helped him make the transition to career and technology teacher at Richland Correctional Institution, Mansfield.*

His students don’t realize they are benefiting from a long-standing program in the College of Education and Human Ecology, the preparation of corrections educators in Workforce Development and Education.

It is a path to Ohio Department of Education teaching licensure for men and women who are skilled in their trades but don’t have bachelor’s degrees, or who have postsecondary degrees but not in education. They have been hired to teach by one of the two Ohio corrections systems and now need help with pedagogy. Eventually they may apply for a standard license valid for teaching students ages eight and above.

“It’s a different setting, completely different,” said Jeremy Russell, who after 16 years as a carpenter began teaching Richland inmates in 1999. The pounding of hammers and the whine of a table saw in the workshop classroom

competed with conversation. Men in matching blue t-shirts were building a framed wall and installing roofing shingles on doghouses.

“This gives people knowledge they can use after they leave,” said Russell, who also was licensed after completing education and human ecology’s workforce training specialty.

### Opening the Cell Door

Data show a disproportionate number of prisoners are poor, undereducated, or members of minorities. In 2008, for

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## Pathway Testing Project Update

by René White

Year 2 of the career-technical education (CTE) assessment development project, known as Articulation through Assessment (AtA), ends in October. As noted in other *Centergram* articles (Austin, Summer 2008), diverse systems, including state-developed tests, are used to document technical skill attainment for Ohio state plan and Perkins IV compliance. Ohio is developing an assessment system at the pathway level. Pathways are groups of specializations that share similarities in terms of duties, tasks, and worker attributes. Working at the intermediate levels of a career field is believed to provide the best outcomes for CTE learners in the labor market. The Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE) collaborates with the Ohio Department of Education as the contractor for development of CTE assessments.

CETE staff specializes in assessment development and delivery, using best practices to achieve reliability and validity. Under current plans, CETE staff members follow a cycle of item bank development, field testing, and administration. Development consists of module layout against units of the state-developed Career Field Technical Content Standards (CFTCS), item creation at facilitated workshops, followed by item processing (editing, graphics rendering), and ending with item review workshops. Subsequently, new pathway assessments are field tested to collect item responses by test takers. Field test data, in combination with item review and judgment by subject matter experts, is used to finalize operational forms. Final forms will be administered through Webxam, the online test delivery system created and maintained by CETE for the Ohio Career Technical Competency Assessment system. A range of purposes for using test scores have been articulated, from federal reporting to hoped-for articulation with postsecondary institutions using statewide CTAG (Career Technical Assurance guide) principles.

Seven pathways began this cycle in 2009. The resulting 3,887 items were field tested between January and June 2010. During field testing, assessments are offered without charge or accountability reporting to obtain an adequate sample of test takers and introduce school districts to Webxam. As a specific example, Marketing Management was field tested as a set of 14 modules (some modules were split because of the number of items). Between 383 and 485 CTE students took each of the 14 modules. Initial item analysis indicates that operational modules of 20-30 items can be developed with replacement items in reserve. The final Marketing Management assessments contain 8 modules. Overall, field test results demonstrate high-quality tests and items with a range of item difficulty values (percentage of students answering correctly) and good internal consistency reliability (most modules > .80). These pathway assessments will be released in final format during this school year.

In addition to field testing, a second round of item writing occurred during 2010. Assessments for six pathways (Media Arts, Visual Design and Imaging, Integrated Marketing Communications, Agriculture and Industrial Power Technology, Animal Science and Management, and Horticulture) and an additional six courses in Agriculture (first course, electives) were developed in 2010. However, these assessments did not undergo item review because postsecondary faculty members were unavailable. Therefore, item review for content validation was rescheduled to summer of 2011. For Year 2 a total of 2,672 items were created and are currently being processed. These items will be field tested beginning January 2011. Looking ahead, seven pathways are selected for assessment development in the coming project year. Item writing will begin this winter, followed by item review next summer for three sets of pathways: seven new (2010-11), six previous with additional agriculture courses (2009-2010), and four stragglers from the 2008-09 item writing. The item review process involves orientation followed by a process whereby panel members take each module and then rate it to provide content validation evidence and benchmark judgments to establish two types of cutoff scores (pass-fail and proficient-advanced).

## The Basics of Standards Alignment

by Traci Lepicki

It is generally accepted that there is a shelf life for standards; they should be reviewed regularly to keep pace with educational reforms and the changing nature of work. Whether it be the result of initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) or the result of expanding career fields such as green technologies, it is vital that standards accurately reflect what students need to know and do in the 21st century. As a consequence, each time standards are reviewed and revised, the work of alignment shortly follows. To have an up-to-date and fully developed system of standards-based education (SBE), all elements in the system should relate in a meaningful way—standards, curriculum, and assessment need to be aligned.

### Aligning Standards and Assessments

Much has been written concerning alignment in SBE, particularly alignment between standards and assessments, specifically tests (Resnick et al., 2004; Webb, 1997). Although approaches vary, researchers basically agree that test-to-standards alignment involves a match of content or concepts as well as a match of depth or cognitive demand (La Marca, 2001). It is understandable that test-to-standards alignment is a focal point given the climate of high stakes accountability in education (Ananda, 2003).

### Aligning Standards and Curriculum

Another focal point is curriculum-to-standards alignment. Equally important to assessment alignment is the extent to which the content and depth of thinking in curriculum relate to standards. Practically speaking, the examination of this alignment involves three basic steps:

1. Understanding the standards
2. Determining the match between existing resources and standards
3. Filling gaps to fully address the standards

**Understanding the standards.** The first step in curriculum-to-standards alignment is getting to know the standards. Whether the standards are “unwrapped” or “unpacked,” it is important to begin with an analysis of the concepts, skills, context, and levels of thinking defined in the standards (Ainsworth, 2003; MPR Associates, 2009). As with test alignment, analysis of content and depth are keys to determining curriculum-to-standards alignment.

**Determining the match between existing resources and standards.** The second step is to identify the matches or gaps in resources, for example, textbooks or teacher-developed activities. Here, curriculum committees or individual teachers can review existing classroom materials against the standards

in order to create an alignment matrix. Recording the standards (written in entirety or indicated by unique numbering) and the resources (descriptions or page numbers) in rows on a chart or in a database visually displays the coverage for a particular standard. In addition, MPR Associates (2009) suggests recording the level of alignment using a 3-point scale (tight alignment, partial alignment, no alignment). The matrix resulting from this step can be used to guide additional curriculum choices.

**Filling gaps to fully address the standards.** The final step in curriculum-to-standards alignment is to supplement or enhance curriculum based on the results of the gap analysis. If there are gaps, committees or teachers can plan a course of action to fill the curriculum needs and can use the alignment matrix to target additional resources to acquire. Options can include selecting published materials, adapting existing materials, or creating new materials in house. Additionally, if there is adequate coverage for the standards in the existing curriculum, then the alignment matrix can be used for other means—to serve as an example for others to learn from within a community of practice, to guide teacher professional development, to inform program management.

Standards-based education is composed of complex relationships between standards, curriculum, and assessment. Navigating this landscape can be difficult especially when standards are revised or new content is introduced, but alignment can provide guidance—a roadmap to inform practice and strengthen decision making.

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## Beyond Repentance—continued from p. 1

instance, almost 60 percent of the 1,600 youth being held in Ohio were African American.

In 2009, 30 percent of Ohio's adult male prisoners and 20 percent of the female were functionally illiterate. Almost two-thirds of the men and three-fourths of the women were unemployed when they broke the law. A whopping 80 percent hadn't finished high school. Half had learning disabilities and almost one in five needed special education.

*Building dog houses gives carpentry students practice in "measure twice, cut once" ... and installing roofing shingles.*

The criminal justice community has long sought ways to change offenders' habits, actions and condition. In the 19th century, inmates were encouraged to repent. In the 20th century, they were encouraged

to reform. In the modern age, they are encouraged to reenter. The goal is for prisoners to leave behind the criminal life and contribute to society.

Since 1973, the state has offered Ohio inmates educational opportunities at each of its facilities. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's Ohio Central School System

serves adult learners. The Ohio Department of Youth Services' Buckeye United School District serves youth from 10–21 who have committed felonies.

*Jack Bartram, drywall and plastering instructor, has received word that former students have started businesses after leaving Richland Correctional Institution.*

Programs range from literacy, General Education Development (GED) and high school, to skilled trades, to hobbies and crafts. No college-level courses exist since a 1994 federal law ended Pell Grant scholarships for prisoners.

Ohio State began the career and technical licensure program for aspiring prison instructors in 1974. It is a part-time, 40-hour sequence.

"The corrections program is unique," says Susan Nell ('77) of Lima, Ohio, a career and technical teacher educator at Ohio State since 1988. "Our teachers are in a nontraditional arena that requires a special set of skills. The college's so-called 'Route B' licensure is a model for the country because it gives teachers those skills and increases the quality of instruction in correctional institutions."

Because of the workforce development and education program's success, the Home Builders Institute, a long-time

Buckeye United School System  
Department of Youth Services\*

941 youth  
5 facilities  
Average age 17.6  
Length of stay 10.9 months  
GED 249  
High school diploma 74  
\*most current data

partner with the college, invited Chris Zirkle, associate professor, and Nell to provide professional development sessions in Virginia in June. For 2 days, they worked with 30 construction technology instructors employed by the Virginia Department of Corrections. "It was very successful," Zirkle said.

Why do experienced professionals choose to teach convicted criminals?

Nell, who taught culinary arts at Lima Correctional Institution before joining Ohio State, gave a compelling reason: altruism.

"This is a population starved for attention; they need someone to give them time," she said with passion. "Along the line, somebody failed them. They became 'that kid,' the one who eventually devolved into breaking the law."

*George Allen ... teaches students in the Richland barber school as they perform 100 "medium sideburn taper fade" cuts daily. The Ohio Barber Board each year tests potential barbers at the state-of-the-art facility's 18 chairs.*

"Life is passing them by while they are in here," said Amanda Crist, who teaches office and computer technology to 14- to 19-year-old boys at the Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility near Massillon.

Crist has a BS in accounting with a minor in secondary education, along with an MBA in finance.

*Auto maintenance instructor Scott Skaggs explains how to adjust a spark plug gap to students at the Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility. His teaching technique includes scaffolding, which builds language and math skills.*

"I always saw myself in business, but the crash of 2001 made it very hard to enter the field. My mom said I should turn over every rock," she said. After seeing a want ad for corrections teachers, "I interviewed and it felt so right. I came in for an observation and I was like, yep, I really want to do this."

With her minor in education, Crist was already familiar with pedagogy. However, she discovered career tech in general is much more hands-on than financial education. In prison schools there are added challenges, including more students with developmental delays, mental health issues and a lack of self-discipline. The Ohio State course work strengthened her ability to deal with those situations.

Corrections instructors have to ensure 3 hours of high-quality instruction rather than the usual 50-minute block. Their curriculum also must meet professional standards. Crist is advised by a committee that “makes sure I’m producing students the industry needs. That’s a big focus of my class.”

## Great Expectations

George Allen’s program at Richland also rigorously follows industry requirements such as the Ohio Barber Board’s 1,800 hours of training. His 20 students perform 100 haircuts every day, all a variation on the “medium sideburn taper fade.”

*Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility inmates bring Amanda Crist handwritten letters to judges and parole officers and ask that her advanced office technology students type and proofread them.*

Each year, board examiners come to Mansfield to test candidates from five correctional institutions in Richland’s state-of-the-art, 18-chair shop. Barbering is one of the best programs, Allen said. “You leave with a license, jobs are easy to get, and you can be very successful.”

The Ohio Central School System annual report for 2008 recounts the success of his student, Kenneth McKinney. Released from Richland in 2007, McKinney was promptly hired part time at a shop in Louisville, Ohio. Within three months, he was promoted to full-time barber. Other teachers recall former students who now rehab buildings or started their own landscaping companies.

“These people need someone to say, ‘You are worth the effort,’” Nell said.

Social responsibility urges us to improve the welfare of inmates. The United Nations calls education in America’s juvenile and criminal justice systems “a fundamental human right.”

There also is a very practical reason to make the effort: it pays off. A U.S. Department of Education study showed that for every government dollar spent on education for inmates, two dollars are saved because those students did not come back.

Crist said of her teenagers, “I don’t pretend that all will be secretaries or office managers. But I try to give them life skills—how to work with people on the job, how to be polite, how to show up on time, how to ask questions—those kinds of transferable skills.”

“If they can’t earn an honest living, they aren’t going to succeed for very long.”

*Landscaping skills can translate into lawn care jobs, and even small businesses, when men leave Richland Correctional Institution.*

## Project KNOTtT Update

by Paula Kurth

On August 6, 7, and 8, Project KNOTtT (Kansas, Nevada, Ohio, and Texas Transition to Teaching) partners from Kansas met in Kansas City, Missouri, to update their knowledge of the KNOTtT Learning Management System (LMS). Specifically, the meeting objectives were to

- review 2010-2011 procedures for Cohort 3 Teachers of Record,
- provide an introduction to the LMS and login process,
- learn more about how to utilize Live Meeting functions and features,
- practice Google calendar functions and features (scheduling, responding, etc.),
- review the online registration process of new participants,
- review the KNOTtT recruitment of participants process,
- practice Moodle Updates (user information, reporting functions, activity reports),
- discuss resource development for modules by e-coaches, and
- analyze Quality Indicator development of standards for alternative certification programs.

The group of 59 individuals consisted of e-coaches, teacher mentors from the Association of Teacher Educators, principal investigators, project directors, project coordinators, reviewers of the Quality Indicators, third-party evaluators, and observers who wanted to learn more about the project’s work. Sessions were presented by Jennifer Bale, David Fultz, Belinda Gimbert, Brad Henry, Patty Hanna, Paula Kurth, Greg Nagy, Rebecca Parker, and Yolanda Stewart.

On August 2-3, Belinda Gimbert, Rebecca Parker, Greg Nagy, and Brad Henry attended the Moodle Moot in Austin, Texas, where they presented “‘KNOTtTed’ through Moodle: How P-12 Teachers and Administrators Collaborate to Accelerate Professional Learning in an e-Community.” Project KNOTtT is one of Moodleroom’s case studies; to read more about it, go to [http://storage.pardot.com/1662/89381/ProjectKnoTtT\\_8310.pdf](http://storage.pardot.com/1662/89381/ProjectKnoTtT_8310.pdf).

Project KNOTtT has held 29 e-coaching sessions during the months of June, July, and August to help prepare teachers/teacher candidates for the Praxis and Texas tests in science, math, special education, and principles of learning and teaching and to introduce them to the LMS of the KNOTtT website.

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## Project KNOTtT—*continued from p. 5*

Face-to-face e-coaching has also been occurring this summer. Sixty people in Nevada were assisted with math, special education, and principles of learning and teaching content on July 9 and 10. In Dallas, 200 teachers of record were registered into the LMS and given an introduction to the KNOTtT website.

Three new learning modules have been completed for the KNOTtT website this summer: Science Foundations, Bilingual, and Spanish.

The Quality Indicators of Strand 3 of Project KNOTtT have been developed with the input of members of the project (Belinda Gimbert, Rebecca Parker, Brad Henry), the Association of Teacher Educators (David Ritchey, Judy Corcillo), and Becky Washington and pilot tested by the Texas (Dallas Independent School District) and the Nevada (Clark County School District) partners. The assessment tool will now be reviewed, revised, and validated with the Kansas KNOTtT partner at the end of October. The Quality Indicators set standards to be used for judging if an alternative teacher education program is meeting high standards.

Official recruitment of Cohort 3 teachers for KNOTtT began September 1, 2010.

## Events

### DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) Institute

November 8-12, 2010

January 24-28, 2011

March 14-18, 2011

June 13-17, 2011

8am-5pm, hosted by CETE, Columbus, OH; \$1,495

### SCID (Systematic Curriculum and Instructional Development)

November 15-19, 2010

January 31-February 4, 2011

March 21-25, 2011

June 20-24, 2011

8am-5pm, hosted by CETE, Columbus, OH; \$1,395

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### Test Development Workshop

October 13-15, 2010

8:30am-4:30pm, hosted by CETE, Columbus, OH; \$1,100

Constructing valid, reliable assessments of job-specific knowledge and skills is critical to effective human resource practice. This workshop provides participants with practical knowledge and skills to understand the creation of valid, reliable, and legally defensible assessments. For information, contact Kathy Summerfield, [summerfield.1@osu.edu](mailto:summerfield.1@osu.edu) or 614/688-4000, or Jim Austin, [austin.38@osu.edu](mailto:austin.38@osu.edu) or 614/292-9897.

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