

CEA Ohio

The Correctional Education Association of Ohio held a virtual conference on October 15th, 2021. The conference was attended by over 175 CEA-O members. Workshops were presented by a diverse group of presenters on several topics including universal design for learning, implicit bias, emotional intelligence, positive school culture, and chair yoga!

The CEA-O Executive Board met on November 13-14, 2021 to work on constitutional and by-law

revisions to make the organization more flexible and to ensure the organization is ready to move forward in the post-pandemic world. The Constitutional changes will be presented to the membership and voted on as prescribed in the current constitution with the next regular election cycle. Edits and revisions are ongoing.

Donald Barker was sworn in as Vice President to fill a vacancy. Don has been a correctional educator for over 15 years and has been active in

in CEA-O as well as CEA Region III. We look forward to having another great correctional educator and CEA member on the Executive Board. This will allow Janet Carter to resume her role as Immediate Past President and enjoy a little break as she has been Vice President, President, and serving as the interim Vice President for the past 6 months.

CEA-O is looking forward to a return to in-person conferences in 2022!

The Case for Digital Literacy in Correctional Education

The workplace landscape in the United States is rapidly transforming. Workers are expected to be fluent in a wide variety of digital technologies and also have the capacity to adapt to new and ever-changing technologies. According to “Digital Skills for an Equitable Recovery¹,” at least 48 million U.S. workers lack these essential skills. Moreover, they lack access to high-quality training that would empower them to increase their digital skill levels.

Beyond simply lacking core digital skills, a significant number of potential workers reportedly have no digital skills. They were unable to complete the PIAAC digital skills assessment², which requires three baseline criteria to be met: 1) prior computer use, 2) willingness

to take a computer-based assessment, and 3) ability to complete four out of six very basic computer tasks, such as using a mouse or highlighting text on the screen.

Ensuring that detained and adjudicated juvenile and adult students have foundational digital literacy skills is paramount for successful reentry into and viability in today’s job market. Correctional educators can play a critical role in unlocking doors to opportunity by cultivating a pipeline of “digital natives³” who can meet the demands of the growing sector of middle-skill jobs that do not require a bachelor’s degree, but do require baseline digital skills.

Fortunately, correctional educators have a growing list of

curriculum resources to utilize. For example, the Computers: One Click at a Time workbook serves to empower both teachers and students. It equips adult learners with gateway computer skills, including use of a mouse, keyboard, e-mail, and the Internet. It also helps more advanced learners gain experience with office productivity software such as word processing and spreadsheets. In the area of career readiness, students receive best practices for searching for employment, interviewing, and creating a resume with opportunities to practice what they have learned. Additionally, instructors are provided with an online Teacher’s Guide featuring easy-to-use tips and tools for delivering high-quality instruction.

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These instructional materials align to the Northstar digital literacy standards and can prepare learners for industry-recognized credentials.

The economy will continue to evolve through technological shifts. Correctional education is not immune to these shifts and

must leverage digital literacy curricula to spur better economic access and a more equitable future for justice-involved workers.

Indiana Corrections Educators Complete Comprehensive Professional Development Program

Teaching in a corrections classroom comes with unique challenges. Often, corrections educators have little to no preparation for teaching special populations, implementing pedagogy or inspiring transformative changes. In addition, corrections classrooms are often compared to one-room schoolhouses, where educators encounter learners whose skill levels vary significantly.

More than 80 educators and administrators from the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) gained the skills and knowledge needed to effectively navigate these challenges. Each of these educators and administrators completed a four-part professional development program presented by Paradigm Education Solutions in collaboration with Ivy Tech Community College, an educational partner with the IDOC.

In October and November of 2021, educators attended two full-day, in-person professional development sessions in Indianapolis, Indiana. Facilitators Coach Alisa Smedley and Dr. Geleana Alston provided educators with evidence-based practices for teaching in a corrections classroom, navigating the corrections culture and engaging adult learners. Following each in-person session, Smedley and Alston met with educators and administrators in a series of online sessions designed to foster small group discussion about the challenges that are unique to the corrections environment and how to address them effectively.

“The correctional classroom is very different from a K-12 or vocational setting. Many obstacles to learning present themselves: institutional lockdowns, skill level disparities, lack of interest—to name a few,” explained Smedley. “A skilled

correctional educator knows how to pivot when faced with such daily challenges. As educators, we play a critical role in preparing our students for successful reentry if we are well trained ourselves.”

Smedley further acknowledged that professional development and ongoing training have a significant impact on equipping educators to foster student engagement and re-entry preparedness.

“Many students have never had the proper ‘soil’ in which to learn, grow and thrive as students. When an effective correctional educator engages with the learner, the learner can truly change and begin to grow,” said Smedley. “Every student represents a family and a community. Educators have the wonderful opportunity to change a student’s life trajectory by preparing them for release.”