

EDUCATION AND CRIME PREVENTION: USING MEDIATED LEARNING
IN CORRECTIONAL SETTINGS IN CANADA

By

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I am very pleased to be asked to speak to you today about education and crime prevention, because of my interest and study in this area over the last 18 years. I was hired to prepare and operate the school at the Special Handling Unit of Saskatchewan Penitentiary. At my institution, in 1990, the rules changed regarding inmate association with one another and with staff. When this occurred, it made me realize that I would have to re-evaluate how I was delivering education courses to my students. I was thinking about one particular student who had been in and out of the institution 4 times and each time he came back to school he was stuck in the same place in the curriculum. It was, I knew, not that I was a poor teacher, but that something in how he was learning was not functioning effectively. This made me consider the possible effects of thinking on learning and also whether positive changes in learning behaviors could lead to positive changes in social behaviors.

Within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) we have a Mission Statement that reminds us of our mandate. Because both our Mission Statement and our Vision of correctional education, agree on our mandate of reducing volatility,

violence, and the risk of re-offence, the connection between improvement in learning behaviors and improvement in social behaviors is of paramount importance.

This imposes grave responsibilities upon us in Correctional Education:

We recognize the possibility for the Education process to intervene and modify self-view, world-view and thereafter, behavior. In the mix, we must contribute in a real way to preparing offenders for a constantly changing and increasingly complex world . Teaching already marginalized people involves assisting them to increase their awareness that they DO have a place in the world, that they can find it and that they can improve the environment in which they find themselves. This defines our emphasis on learning process.

We must balance the relevance of our programs with offender needs and with the curriculum parameters of provincial ministries.

In correctional education, we, like so many adult educators, talk about self-esteem building, as well as skill acquisition, but I think we must face very real questions about correctional education for which we need to find specific answers.

What exactly is it that we do to prepare our offenders for independent lifelong learning?

What exactly is it that we do to prepare our offenders for living ?

What exactly is it that we do to prepare our offenders for working?

What exactly is it that we do to prepare our offenders for responsible citizenship?

We must have direct answers to these questions if our education programs are to be seen as effective.

For our offender, the main problem around these questions has to do with change- lasting personal change.

We mustn't forget that we work in a dichotomy of cultures in prison - our "mainstream" culture, if you like, which imposes change and asks for pro-social responses to change, and the offenders' counter-culture, which asks for uniformity of thinking and behaving, lack of change, and, often, responses that are NOT pro-social.

1. How can we adequately respond to the sentencing of the courts while creating a greater potential for our clients to return to the community and remain there?
2. How can all parts of the Institution become part of this process?
3. How can Education for example find its unique place within the process?
2. What mechanisms can we put in place that will ensure that all parts of the process remain connected to the larger picture of corrections and its longer term goals?

3. How can all this be achieved, given the time constraints placed on us by Offender Intake Assessment, the many demands on inmate time, including participation in correctional activities such as work and core program interventions, including Education?

To answer these questions, I would like to point out what CSC has done during the last 10 - 15 years. Of course, it should be understood that we have not solved ALL of the problems. A lot has yet to be done.

CSC began in 1991 by creating a Mission Statement for all our staff to uphold and further, a statement of our Core Values . We created The Correctional Strategy, part of which concerns assessing what we call criminogenic needs-those which contributed to the decision to commit the offense, such as psychological problems, values and attitudes, substance abuse, lack of employment and lack of education, marital and family issues and sexual and physical abuse. The Strategy insists then, that all interventions, including Correctional Programs, within which is Education, must be designed and researched to achieve their particular ends and that these interventions must be applied at strategic points in the sentence in order to have maximum effect.

Further, in 1996, we established Reintegration as our name for this process, the aim of which is to constantly remind us of our longer term goal of sending back to the community people able to live there safely and productively.

Intake Assessment is that period of time (4-6 weeks) at the beginning of the offender's sentence, which we have assigned during which all community crime reports, institutional testing, interviews and case conferencing can take place to

accurately assess the offender's needs. It is important to look at this in order to understand what it is we are trying to prevent.

The Parole Officer assists him to develop a Correctional Plan, in which program prescriptions are made. This takes place with input from all departments including Education that deal with the offender.

The term Reintegration also suggests that there will need to be a greater degree of collaboration between the Institution and corrections in the Community. This means that some programs may be more effective when offered within the community context. It also means that offenders should not be held in prison in order to complete program assignments if those programs could be completed in the community. For obvious reasons, this could include Education.

In Institutions, all personnel who have dealings with the offender form the Case Management Team, the mechanism for monitoring offender progress. Parole officers direct Case Conferences, not to assure ourselves of the offender's lack of abilities, but to discuss what is happening so that his best performance can be acknowledged formally and if he is having problems, the Team can assist him to get back on a better track.

Aside from its positive focus, the term Reintegration contains the word INTEGRATION. For me, this term suggests holistic Institutions - that is that within the Institution we speak with one voice. I know we are not there yet, but mechanisms such as the Case Management Team will surely help get us there .

Integration asks us to see how all activities including those of Education remain connected to the Mission of the whole Service. We do this by questioning our assumptions constantly in search of arriving at what is right.

This suggests that education must focus on process as much as on content. CSC takes very seriously the process of educating. We call upon each educator to use a method of teaching which is at once correctional as well as a vital part of the Reintegration process.

This definition requires a process view of Education- that the end product of our educational services is a person who understands and can transfer the process of learning to all aspects of his daily life, while having achieved a specific level of skills and knowledge.

As we look at all of this, we cannot help but see that education is one of a combination of factors that leads to criminal behavior. The question then is HOW can education play a role in preventing crime? Let us focus for a moment on the WHAT of education- the curriculum- How many people do you think committed a crime because they did not have the skill of adding fractions? How many do you think stayed out of prison because they could add fractions? The questions may seem very simple but it would seem that SKILLS, the WHAT of education courses is not what makes All the difference.

I would like to suggest that part of the difference might come about from a student having been exposed to differing perspectives of the world and

comparing and evaluating them to arrive at his own set of values. This is not the content of education but part of the process of education.

When most of us went to school there seemed to be a teaching philosophy that said that if you acquired the academic skill, you would "get" the connections between academic skills, and social skills or ethical perspectives. In corrections, our students didn't "get it" or they wouldn't be with us. If this is true to any extent, then wouldn't it make sense that an effective and efficient learning process could play an important role in assisting students to arrive at their own world view? If learning process then is as important as learning the content of curriculum, then wouldn't it make sense that a teaching method that encourages the building of learning strategies, the sharing, comparing and evaluating of differing views, would support an effective learning process? This method is Cognitive Enrichment Advantage and these are some of the reasons that CSC has chosen in my part of Canada at least, to use Cognitive Enrichment Advantage as our teaching method. As many of you may already know, it includes at its base, Mediated Learning Experience.

What have we found as results, after using the method since 1997?

1. Learning rates are accelerated- using formal testing before and after the education programs, grade level improvements are 1.5 - 2 grades higher than before we began to use the method.
2. Research conducted in 2000, shows that inmates who have been in our classrooms studying with CEA method for a period of time and have also

taken Anger Management have committed fewer chargeable offenses while inside prison than those students who have not been to school.

3. Students report that they have a greater sense of themselves and their capabilities as a result of the method, no longer see errors as failures, and see that they have more options to use in their learning.

Where do we go from here? Let us look for a moment at the expectations the world has of our children.

The most recent definition of Literacy, published in 1998 speaks to issues that are pertinent for both adults and children.

Literacy is the ability to understand and use printed information in daily activities at home at work and in community to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

We also know because students, whether children or adults, do not come to school with all these skills built-in, it is the job of the school system to begin the building-in process from the first year in school.

Through CEA method we can help people learn generic learning skills with tools for building their own learning strategies.

In simple terms, we start a conversation with the learner during which we build a shared vocabulary, made up of labels called Building Blocks of Thinking and Tools of Learning. You can refer to these on the handout you received. These

labels are really names of pieces of the learning process. By questioning what the words mean and how the learner thinks he might use them in a learning situation, and questioning what the results would be if he did so, we help the learner evaluate his use of the labels and let him build his own learning strategies. During subsequent lessons, we ask how he did use them and what level of success he had. We do this to target the development of self-evaluation skills and the development of the awareness of the need to use them, so integral to a successful learning process.

Let us stop for a moment, to look again at how all of this relates to crime prevention.

- A group of psychologists, led by D. Mishel in the 60's did some interesting tests with young children aged 4-6. The study was to look at the effect of delayed gratification on the development of criminal behaviours.
- (The researcher placed invited children aged 4-7 years old, to come, one at a time into a room, and sat him/her at a table and placed a marshmallow on the table. The researcher then said: "I am going to give you this marshmallow, but before I do, I have to leave the room for a few minutes. You can have the marshmallow anytime you want, but if you can wait till I get back, I will give you 2." The researcher then left and observed the behaviours. More girls than boys were able to wait for the second marshmallow. Some children took it right away. Some used avoiding techniques such as looking around the room, waling around and then took the marshmallow. This was a longitudinal study and the findings

were that those who took it right away had developmental patterns as follows:
anger and acting out by ages 8-10; outright flaunting of authority by ages 12-13; vandalism by age 14--15 and Breaking and Entering by ages 15-16. The girls' developmental cycle was the same but about 2 years later in each level. One question arising from this might then be:

How to delay gratification? One answer might be: Stop and think before you do. CEA teaching method gives us the opportunity to assist children to learn to do just that.

In the Correctional Service of Canada, we use CEA method, in the 11 Institutions of the Prairie Region, that is the provinces of Manitoba Saskatchewan and Alberta. I would like, for a moment, to focus on the joint projects CSC is now involved in. In 1999 I met two very interesting ladies while conducting CEA training at the University of Calgary. Both from a London-Ontario and England who asked me to participate in their projects.

So far I have trained 60 teachers in London, Ontario in two School Boards including Principals, vice principals and teaching assistants, and 90 in London England. I returned to train support teachers in Ontario in order to ensure that the program they are operating can continue over time.

Project in London Ontario- 5-8 multiple disabilities - learning attention and movement- Funding comes, in part, from National Crime Prevention Centre Community mobilization grant. In Ontario there are 2 school boards involved

in both city and rural schools; 2 Children's services organizations with occupational therapists, social workers and so forth, 2 Learning Disabilities Associations; the London Health Unit, a children's peer mentoring group, and the Parents of Children with ADD. This was appealing to the funder because of the community capacity building inherent in having the support of all the agencies.

The research base for this project includes conclusions that: children with differences in learning ,attention and movement are at high risk for negative outcomes including juvenile delinquency. Children between 5-7 years of age, with attention difficulties show greater increase in antisocial behaviour. Between 30-50% of children with attention difficulties also have conduct disorder. On the positive side, Brooks reports in a 1994 study that resilience may be fostered in children with learning and attention difficulties by assisting them to develop effective strategies for learning, and areas of competence at school and in leisure activities.

CEA method was chosen because of its attention to development in these areas.

I spoke earlier about label names for the pieces of the learning process. Self-Regulation refers to the self-talk that we use as we do a task, paying attention to our ability, time and availability of materials to do the job as well as the self-assessing that we do along the way. Problem Identification refers to that feeling of ill ease when something isn't going well, and the identification of

what that is. Some teachers have reservations about young children being capable of saying the label names, understanding and using them.

In London, Ontario, approximately four months after the first implementation of CEA method, I am told, in a Grade 1 class they were having pizza slip day. It was near lunchtime and there was a lot of noise and activity as kids found their slips and were getting ready for pizza. From the back of the room came a loud wail from a boy aged 6 from the research project, yelling: " I need some Self- Regulation! I need some Self-regulation!" When the teacher tried to mediate the situation, he wailed "I've lost my pizza slip!" When she asked him " Is there another Building Block or Tool you could use here, he replied, " Well, I used Problem Identification. That's how I know I lost the skip, but I need Self-Regulation so maybe I can find it and I won't do it again!"

Of interest in this story- the boy certainly recognized and internalized the label names. Although he had not been able to use the label ahead of time without being cued by the teacher to do so, he certainly knew that he HADN'T used it. If we believe that lasting personal change often results from a life crisis, Who knows but what a boy, marginalized by his difficulties from the rest of the group, may just find the loss of a pizza slip a major life crisis that may promote HIS change?

The Ontario project has a peer mentoring group as I explained. The mentors work with the children from the project while they are playing in the schoolyard. The project expects to teach the mentors some mediational questions to ask the children that will support the work done in the classroom.

CEA method also includes a strong parent component that is proving successful in Ontario.

To date there were 4 months of biweekly parent meetings moving to monthly meetings since March, to teach the parents the labels and mediation strategies. Out of that comes the reinforcement at home, of the teachers' work at school-in other words, building common ground between parents and school, and capacity building among parents themselves. The first thing the teachers noticed was that CEA parents have become the most visible in the School. Another benefit has been that, through discussions and socializing at the meetings, parents have learned about each other on different levels and thus the Project is also helping to build the capacity for the stronger linkages we call community.

To conclude I would like to call your attention to UNESCO's articulation of 4 pillars of Education for the 21st Century. These pillars are reflected in the focus of CEA method whether it is used with adults or children.

1. Learning to learn- teachers use the shared vocabulary of the Building Blocks and Tools to start a conversation with learners. Within the conversation

teachers pose questions to determine where students are in the learning process and to assist students to build their own learning strategies.

2. Learning to Earn - real education is not learning FOR employment but CEA method can assist students to make connections between what they learn in school and the world of work by targeting the transfer of learning process, and, to some extent, content to other learning situations outside school.
3. Learning to Live Together-CEA helps develop a strong sense of our interdependence by extending an invitation "in" during the learning conversation; by expecting that all responses to What does this mean to you? are likely to include cultural references. Respect for the statements of all students ensures that the invitation will remain open to cultural exchange and differences.
4. Learning to Be: the holistic aspect of education that includes attending to our spiritual side. CEA method is based on a conversation between teacher and learners. Within these conversations, values issues are not targeted but do come up. Through extending the invitation " in", differing perspectives are shared. By questioning, the teacher can ensure that the perspectives are not only shared but compared and personally evaluated by the students.

Will education on its own prevent crime?- of course not. Is there a relationship between education and crime prevention? Something as seemingly insignificant as a marshmallow would indicate yes. Can CEA method, effectively used by appropriately trained teachers, contribute to an increase in the ability to learn, in self-assessment and self-evaluation? Research and my own practice indicate yes., and surely a true feeling of competence could lead to better attendance at school, achieving at higher levels and the possibility of achieving goals, whether the student is adult or child.

CEA and all the qualities listed above have the potential to build strong independent and interdependent lifelong learners , to bring the community into school and the school into the community. Surely then, CEA helps us make stronger links between education and crime prevention. The Correctional Service of Canada is proud to be part of this initiative both in Canada as well as in other parts of the world.