

# CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

HB 2619 & SB 6260  
Legislative policy request

## What would this bill do?

This bill would allow community and technical colleges to promote and operate educational programs in prisons. Colleges, through new and existing partnerships with the Department of Corrections, would be allowed to offer associate and bachelor's degrees using existing resources.

## Who would this bill affect?

This bill would affect inmates who meet criteria established by the Department of Corrections. The department could consider giving priority to inmates who:

- are within five years or less of release
- do not already have a postsecondary degree
- have a reentry plan that includes participation in a post-secondary education program

## How much would this bill cost?

This bill will not add costs to taxpayers or the state.

## Why is this bill important?

Studies show a positive correlation between educational opportunities in prison and reduced recidivism rates. Each year, between 7,000 and 8,000 inmates are released from Washington's correctional facilities.<sup>1</sup> Those who participated in an educational program have a 43 percent lower chance of returning to prison.<sup>2</sup> Education programs give students hope, focus, goals and a new way of thinking, a benefit in prison and after release.<sup>3</sup>

With new skills learned and credentials in hand from prison educational programs, former inmates are more likely to find and keep jobs once released. An estimated 72 percent of available jobs in the state requiring at least a postsecondary degree by 2021,<sup>4</sup> and that number is only expected to increase.<sup>5</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that unemployment rates for people with only a high school diploma are twice that of those with an associate degree.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, adults who participated in a postsecondary education program while in prison are 13 percent more likely to be employed.<sup>7</sup>

A 2014 study update by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimated the state sees a return of up to \$20 for every dollar invested in correctional education.<sup>8</sup> Public safety increases, unemployment decreases and the financial burden on the state and taxpayers eases.

### Sources:

1. Washington State Department of Corrections. (FY 2013). Number of Prison Releases by County of Release. Olympia: DOC.
2. RAND Justice, Infrastructure, and Environment. (2013). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. Headquartered in Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
3. Washington Department of Corrections testimony before Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee, Feb. 6, 2014.
4. Background analysis conducted by SBCTC, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, and the Washington Student Achievement Council for "A Skilled and Educated Workforce 2013 Update" published October 2013.
5. SBCTC research findings: "Washington State Population and Employment Data 2010-2030, Implications for Community and Technical Colleges," presented to House Higher Education Committee Jan. 14, 2014.
6. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). "Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment." Retrieved from Employment Projections.
7. RAND Justice, Infrastructure, and Environment. (2013). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. Headquartered in Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
8. Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (2015). Inventory of Evidence-Based and Research-Based programs for Adult Corrections. WSIPP.