

Prison Education Offers Academic/Vocational Services in JTVCC High Security Area

Maximum security inmates in Delaware’s largest men’s prison will now have increased access to educational and programming opportunities following the construction of a new classroom building at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC).

Over 97% of offenders in Delaware’s criminal justice system will exit the prison system. To successfully reintegrate into their communities, these individuals must have the skills and information necessary to attain employment and to support families. Understanding this critical component of the Governor’s Reentry Initiative, the Department of Correction and the Department of Education Prison Education Program worked together to offer educational services to offenders in JTVCC’s High Security Area.

Under then-Warden Metzger’s leadership, an extension to SHU Building 20 was constructed that included five rooms dedicated to educational and treatment services. National research indicates that inmates who receive educational services while incarcerated have increased levels of employment upon release and decreased levels of recidivism.



hig Bldg. 20 Addition

Classes began in the Secure Housing Unit’s (SHU) Building 20 on Monday, February 3rd. These classes offer Adult Basic Education (ABE) to inmates who don’t have a GED® or high school diploma. Additionally, Delaware Safety Council’s Flagger Certification will be offered for inmates soon to be released to increase employability skills.

Classes of ten students each receive five hours of instruction weekly with the goal of increasing academic skills towards the attainment of a GED® or high school diploma.



Bldg. 20 Classroom

Previously, ABE classes were only offered to inmates with a minimum or medium security classification. ABE classes in addition to Life Skills, Groves Diploma, Culinary, Automotive, and Computer are

offered to those minimum and medium security inmates who reside on the part of the prison referred to as the compound. When high security students are transitioned to the compound, they will be able to continue their educational pursuits in these classes. The Prison Education Program will collect and analyze data from this project to determine its effectiveness. DOC's Bureau Chief of Prisons, Shane Troxler, said of the project, "Providing educational opportunities to maximum security inmates motivates better behavior so they can get program points and flow down to the compound sooner. It also gets them one step closer to being ready for reentry because they can work towards their GED or a job certification. Previously, the education and training options for maximum security inmates was fairly limited."

To maximize success, it is essential that the right instructor is teaching this class. Marc Dickerson, a DOE licensed and certified teacher with classroom, coach and counselor experience provides instruction in Bldg. 20. Mr. Dickerson brings 22 years of experience to this project and believes that education will help these men to envision new futures and develop new pathways to successful reentry. Mr. Dickerson joins the 15 other JTVCC Prison Education instructors dedicated to providing quality instructional services to prisoners housed at JTVCC.

The expansion of educational services to provide increased access for more offenders was a key recommendation in a final report led by Judges William Chapman and Charles Oberly. The Bldg. 20 initiative will provide high security offenders with a second chance to learn new skills and demonstrate a positive mindset – both essential ingredients to successful reentry.