

ORIENTATION GUIDE FOR CORRECTIONS EDUCATORS

Road Back Home project, Phase Two

2008

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Orientation Guidebook Editors

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching in a correctional centre can be a very unusual job indeed. Each day as we enter our workplace, the tall fences and razor wire serve as constant reminders of just how unique a teaching job this is.

Like most educators, you probably chose a career in education because you saw it as a way to effect positive change in society, and as you embark upon the next phase of your teaching career, you may wonder whether or not the reality of teaching inmates will allow you to meet your original idealistic goals. Let us assure you that teaching in a correctional centre can be one of the most rewarding phases of your teaching career, perhaps even a lifelong calling you will stick with until retirement. In fact, skilled and committed educators are arguably more needed and valued within Corrections than virtually anywhere else.

Students at a correctional centre will often view their teacher in a myriad of ways. To some, a teacher may be a beacon of hope for a better future, while others may perceive their teacher as a link with the normalcy of the outside world. Others, unconsciously at least, may associate their teacher with past failures or with arbitrary authority that reprimands, oppresses, and judges. Still others may believe that their teacher can be a sort of healer, one who can somehow lead them safely through difficult emotional, addiction, or mental health issues.

Regardless of how we may be perceived, or the challenges with which we may be faced, one thing will soon become very clear: Offering respect, expecting it in return, and modeling it will form a critical basis for a successful teaching career with Corrections.

Surprisingly, up until now, very little has been written to outline formally the basic issues that will confront educators starting a new phase of their careers in Corrections. In the past, most simply had to figure out their new environment through trial and error. To their credit, many have been able to do this very successfully and have gone on to long and satisfying teaching careers. This method, however, is generally not considered the most efficient way to begin your new career as a Corrections educator.

A new Corrections educator will invariably be compelled to reflect deeply on, and grapple with, the following questions and observations:

- I will be working with Correctional officers who are tasked to model appropriate behaviour to inmates and who work with offenders encouraging them to take advantage of programming to make positive changes during their incarceration. All this takes place within the overarching rules, routines, and discipline of the centre. I, as an educator and role model, generally try to nurture students, project warmth, and encourage self-expression. Exactly what is my responsibility in a correctional centre, and are the roles between correctional officers and educators very different?
- Since I will be working closely with students, how do I establish safe and professional boundaries while still showing respect, friendliness, and empathy?
- What are important health and safety issues of which I must be aware in a correctional centre?
- Many of my students will struggle with problems revolving around violence, abuse, addiction, and mental health issues. How will these problems impact the learning environment I wish to create? And how can I acknowledge and work with these issues to offer a valuable learning experience for my students?
- What kinds of teaching strategies can I employ that will help some of my students overcome barriers that have prevented them from attaining academic success in the past?
- Inmate culture has its own lingo, values, and mores. What do I need to know about these in order to understand my students better?
- A correctional facility is replete with procedures, protocols, and regulations. During the first several weeks of my new teaching career, which of these must I absolutely find out about and understand?

This booklet has been written and compiled by active educators working in correctional centers throughout British Columbia. Collectively, these contributors have many years of teaching

experience, and they designed the following pages to help shed light on the observations and questions outlined above.

The writing process was collaborative, with individual writers taking the lead on some chapters, while others provided feedback. And due to the nature of the many authentic examples, several sections were written and maintained in first person.

It is our sincere hope that this booklet will help facilitate your transition from “regular” teaching on the “outside” to a productive and enjoyable career as a Corrections educator.

We wish you all the best.

CHAPTER 1

Institutional information as it pertains to educators

WHAT COLOUR IS YOUR SHIRT?

Referring to the title of this article, I am referencing the male inmates, who are dressed in red, and Correctional staff, who are dressed in blue. We stand between those two colours, dressed in neither. Philosophically we need the respect and cooperation of both the staff and the inmates. Like correctional officers, we need to supervise, empathize with, and advocate for our students as we lead them to achievement and change.

The purpose of this chapter is to give someone who is new to teaching in a provincial correctional setting an idea of some of the more pertinent institutional rules and policies.

If you are reading this document, congratulations! It likely means you have been hired as a Corrections educator. Before you start working in the facility, you will have to pass a CPIC check. (CPIC is an abbreviation for Canadian Police Information Centre, and is pronounced See-Pick.) This check reveals whether or not you have a criminal record and if so, if you present a risk to the safety or security of the institution.

Shortly after being hired, you will go through a more in-depth orientation with Corrections staff. They will explain the correctional centre's rules, what you can and cannot do when you are in the centre, and your responsibilities and responses to incidents that occur in the classroom and elsewhere in the centre, such as: Code Yellow, Code Blue, or Code Red. You will receive information about security procedures from the centre's staff during the orientation, but briefly, these codes indicate the following warnings:

- Code Yellow – officers need assistance
- Code Blue – medical emergency
- Code Red – escaped inmate.

Personal Alarm Transmitters (PATs) are the small devices that staff carry to instantly inform the correctional officers that assistance is required. Depending on your jail's systems, you may be issued a VHF radio. If inmates instigate any kind of violence toward one another, the educator, or any other individual within the educators' area, pressing the button on the PAT or signalling immediately to the control centre through the radio will bring help promptly. Pressing the button sets in motion the issuance of a Code Yellow, and a procession of correctional officers should appear momentarily. **DO NOT INTERVENE PHYSICALLY IN AN INMATE ALTERCATION!** You may want to say something along the lines of, "STOP FIGHTING NOW!" and then remove yourself to a safe distance from the fracas to avoid potential injury. If you do not hear an announcement like "Code Yellow in the school area" within 30 seconds of pressing the PAT or making the call on your radio or telephone, then do it again.

It is the educator's responsibility to be aware of the procedures that contractors must follow in the event of one of these incidents or other emergencies, since each facility will have a specific method in place for necessary action. This must be known before educators first enter their classrooms within the centre.

CONTRABAND

The reason the facility has a contraband list in the first place is that certain items or substances may be harmful to other inmates or staff. Here is a starting point for the contraband list:

- Pens with opaque shafts
- Paper clips
- Geometry sets
- Cell phones
- Chewing gum and other food items
- Pornography
- Cash/credit cards
- Drugs.

The list may vary from secure/remand centres to medium/open custody centres. More important, however, before you enter your class for the first time, ask the correctional staff for a complete list of contraband. If you have questions, they are the people to ask.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, one of the most important relationships you will have in your career as a Corrections educator is with the correctional officers and supervisors. They help us on a daily basis with such tasks as giving us our jail identification and PATs; opening doors; responding to classroom disruptions (Code Yellows); creating class lists; using CORNET (Corrections NETwork, integrated software inmate database) to screen students for conflict issues; escorting us to living units when necessary; informing us of inmate movement to other facilities; mailing packages to other facilities; and setting up and helping in the administration of GED tests, among other interactions.

For all they do for us, what is it that we do for correctional staff and supervisors? We offer a few things in return including keeping prisoners positively engaged; providing a community presence in the centre; fostering a culture of hope; and even acting as a sounding board for correctional officers and staff to vent some of their problems and institutional frustrations.

In addition to these items, there are other things Corrections educators can do to bolster the relationship between teachers and staff. For example, thank the correctional staff for their extra efforts by including them in the class celebrations and other special events, like the Friday of the GED test (which works out to about five or six times a year). Some centres have formal Dogwood-Certificate-cap-and-gown graduations. School administration will usually support our efforts, and they fund it; but check with your District first. It is important to invite correctional officers to celebrate with students at graduations.

There are many ways to show that you have common ground, sometimes just a conversation over a coffee is enough to get that started.

Offering special treats is not the only way to build rapport with staff, of course. A few of the other things that can be done include keeping staff informed about the mood in the classroom; participating in weekly treatment team meetings from the Integrated Offender Management Program (if time permits); supporting staff fundraising efforts; and keeping our common work areas clean and graffiti-free.

CON GAMES

One of the more valuable segments of the orientation illustrates how inmates try to manipulate staff and contractors.

This type of manipulation tends to begin with a seemingly small “favour,” along the lines of, “Can you mail this letter for me?” or “If I give my password, would you check/print out my email for me?” DO

NOT DO ANY SUCH THING! Once you have performed some task like this for an inmate, the inmate will expect and push for ever-increasing demands, despite the fact that even the first such action shows that the inmate is controlling the educator. The offenders are constantly trying to get other people to bring them things they are not allowed to have, and by getting you to break the rules, they now have leverage with which to blackmail and/or use you to continue providing these “favours.”

Here are a few examples:

- “Can I use your phone?”
- “Can you get me just one (chocolate bar/cigarette/picture of Jessica Alba naked...)?”
- “Can you just let me borrow your calculator instead of making me sign one out?”
- “My wife couldn’t come visit me this week, so can you get a message to her for me?”

If you are ever unsure about an action, ask for guidance from a correctional officer.

One final caution: **DO NOT WHISTLE WHILE YOU ARE IN JAIL.** There is a negative connotation and it is an action to be avoided.

CHAPTER 2

Boundaries

PREFACE

Before starting my teaching assignment in a provincial correctional centre, I sought the advice of two educators who had previously taught in Corrections. One of the educators labelled all students as "very evil men," who could never be trusted. He saw his students only as first-class manipulators who were always on the lookout to take advantage of everyone around them. In contrast, the other educator perceived her students as "misguided angels" who, with the proper nurturing, would ultimately always succeed. She felt that it was important to always give students the benefit of the doubt and saw them as incapable of doing any real wrong.

In my own experience with students, I've tried to find a healthy middle ground: I find value in my students and see the potential for growth and change. I often enjoy their company and have learned much from my interactions with them. At the same time, I am keenly aware of the significant obstacles that many of my students face. Despite the noblest efforts of educators, correctional officers, and drug and alcohol counsellors, many of my students will continue to re-offend and hurt people along the way.

It takes a great deal of empathy and wisdom to provide quality education to incarcerated adults that balances hope with a realistic understanding of this unique population.

On the one hand, if the educator is constantly suspicious, aloof, and cynical about any of the efforts students are making, then meaningful relationships will likely not be established. When students perceive that the educator has no faith in their ability to change, then a poisonous atmosphere is created in the classroom. Students feel that they are valued little, and thus will likely become defensive or simply withdraw from the program.

On the other hand, forming an allegiance with students implies an acceptance of their values – almost a romanticizing of their lifestyle – and then educators have vacated their position as an agent of change. If educators form a buddy-buddy relationship with students, they cease to be productive role models.

Neither of these outcomes is truly desirable, and both are ultimately detrimental to the welfare of our students. We are first and foremost educators, but we also must recognize that we can play an important role in the rehabilitation process.

BOUNDARIES – GETTING TO THE MAIN POINTS

Understanding your role as an educator in a correctional centre and having healthy relationships with your students makes it much easier to negotiate your way through the complicated issues that will likely occur in your interactions. Boundary issues seem to come up on a regular basis in a correctional centre.

Before getting into more practical strategies in dealing with boundaries, here is a word of caution: over time, educators can become too comfortable in the classroom environment. Educators, at some level, forget that they are working in a correctional centre, where issues of safety and confidentiality are paramount. This is when boundary lines can be blurred and our effectiveness as educators can be damaged. Most of us teaching in correctional settings can relate to the following requests: downloading music; passing along messages to other inmates or people outside the jail; photocopying pictures; printing lyrics, etc.

I vividly remember a situation where I had developed excellent rapport with a student and had come to understand some of his heartaches and struggles. After a particularly powerful encounter with him, he looked at me with pleading eyes and said, “Today is my daughter’s birthday. Can I please use your phone to wish her ‘Happy Birthday?’” My first impulse was to say, “Of course!” But then I quickly caught myself. The default position in situations such as this is always to REMEMBER YOU ARE WORKING IN A PRISON.

For us to have a lasting impact in the classroom, we need the cooperation of correctional staff. The integrity and effectiveness of the school program over the long run depends on how we establish and maintain boundaries.

Correctional officers at the facility are much more likely to work alongside us and support our efforts when we don’t compromise in the area of boundaries. We also help more students in the long run, in a more meaningful way, if we honour the rules established by institutional policies and protocol. In fact, it is useful at times to remind students that the reason we usually say “no” to their requests (like those listed above) is because it does not relate directly to the business of education – and, to put it bluntly, we want to keep on good terms with Correctional staff so that we can continue to help our students.

THE SPECIFICS

A few key boundary issues have cropped up for us. We all face these in some form, and we categorize ours broadly into issues of permission (what we will and won't do for our students, and our rationale), gender boundaries, and disclosure boundaries.

PERMISSION

Students will sometimes ask to use the phone or fax in our office. Your specific centre will have rules and guidelines for these types of requests. Generally, we don't give inmates access to phone calls. We have to have Corrections supervisory approval to go outside of the centre rules around phone calls provided by contractors.

Corrections has to be able to trust that we are not being used as a communication route for inappropriate outside contact. If a student needs to talk on the phone, remember that they have access to inmate phones, and you must have the authority to provide the call. Ask!

Calls for educational purposes are dialled by the educator and always monitored by the educator's presence. Similarly, we will provide individual access to the Internet in the office only if we are able to supervise this access, and even then only for career, school, or job-related information relevant to a student's release plan.

We tell our students that our calls are monitored, just as theirs are, and we will leave the office door open. We basically try to keep our actions as transparent and accountable as possible – this is general best practice.

There are other avenues already existing in the system through which inmates can accomplish these tasks: John Howard Society advocates do some of these things, and the inmates' case managers, some others. Your time is valuable and if doing administrative chores for students gets in the way of you doing your job, then simply tell the students that you won't.

Students will also ask for photocopies of work – this is appropriate for Communications 12 (students submit personal and business letters that they also mail out); Art 12 (students usually want to keep their original artwork); and perhaps other subjects. However, when a student brings artwork (e.g. drawings for tattoos) into class from another inmate, we do not photocopy – it's a service we reserve for students only, and only for classroom-related material.

GENDER BOUNDARIES

As a female, I have found that sexual innuendo is actually rare and that, in general, students do show respect in class – they know and appreciate that you are there to help. For me, a brief anecdote will best illustrate those rare instances where I have been placed in a conflict situation. I dropped into the library beside our classroom one day. Several inmates, including a few of my students, were using the library, mostly sitting around and chatting. Somehow (though it was not relevant to my interaction with them) one of my students mentioned that he'd "prefer it if you tied me up."

When you're the target of sexual innuendo or comment, especially when it's spoken in front of others, it can feel as though you've been stripped of your dignity. Your role as an educator has been compromised through no fault of your own. You could deal with this by laughing it off, but this is a situation where your boundaries need to be re-established. Because I was in the library and not the classroom, I had the option of leaving, which I did. I needed to calm down, because my instinct was to react in anger, which I would have regretted later. I had to think carefully about what I wanted to say, and I had to speak to my teaching partner about it. The next time I saw the student in class, I quietly asked him to never speak to me in that way again. I told him that doing it in front of an audience humiliated me, and that we could not continue as student and educator if it happened again, i.e., he would not be invited to class.

Another female educator and I have had notes left for us by a vulnerable, quick-to-anger student. He wrote that he had a "crush" on the other educator, and that he needed to speak to me privately because I was "the only one he could talk to." While I wanted to help him, this felt like one of those red-flag situations, and so again I spoke to my teaching partner. Her advice was to keep it during class time and to not invite the student to talk outside of class. I couldn't in good conscience accommodate his request for what felt like a private counselling session, and I ended up referring him to the on-site Reverend. To have done otherwise would have felt like overstepping my boundaries as an educator.

CLOTHING

Corrections has rules about clothing (for example, no open-toed shoes), but the rest is just common sense. Dress as you would in any classroom setting – casual but professional. Of course, avoid red (if you work with males) and grey (if you work with females).

I often forget to put my wedding ring on in the morning, but I now make sure to have it. Before they knew me, students noticed the lack of a ring and asked about my availability. I don't know that I recommend this,

but it is an idea to consider: wear a ring, even if you aren't actually married. It's a hassle-free and conflict-free way to help enforce your boundaries for those few students who will regard you in a capacity other than that of educator. If you are comfortable with this subterfuge, it will probably help you avoid unwelcome advances.

You will have a lot of students who are very attractive, intelligent and charming. I try to take that charm at face value when they're "working it," rather than view it as flirting. Charm has likely served them well in the past, and it is probably also a survival mechanism to avoid physical and emotional injury. Just be immune to it when a student is using it to manipulate you, and just continue the business of teaching.

UNIT VISITS

We often go into units to visit students – to bring and collect work outside of class time, to find out why they haven't been attending, etc. – and these unit visits are a challenge unto themselves. As a female, this was by far the most intimidating thing I ever had to do in Corrections education. I was literally stepping out of my comfort zone – the classroom – and entering what was essentially my students' living room. If you have to visit units, here are my suggestions:

- It's a good idea to call the unit first and ask a correctional officer (CO) if it's a good time to drop in.
- When you enter the unit, go straight to a CO – they may have to sign you in, and they definitely need to know you're there! COs are often busy and may not see you entering, but you will change the dynamic of the unit when you come in, and they have to be aware of it.

You may be asked to leave. If so, find out when would be a good time to come back.

- Watch where you're looking; the shower areas are very open and have lots of windows.
- If you're going to sit down to work, ask your student if that's okay – remember you're in their living room – and try to sit so that you can see as much of the room as possible.
- If a student is in his "house" (cell) with the door closed, don't disturb him. If there's a sock on the door, definitely don't disturb him.

If the door is slightly ajar, you might choose to go over and knock, but it's best not to actually enter the cell. You'll be out of view of the CO, and you've just made it easy for the

student to shut the door and isolate the two of you. Also, you're invading the student's limited personal space, and this can be uncomfortable for him or her – personal space is often a source of conflict among inmates. If a student wants to show you something (e.g. artwork on the wall), get him or her to bring it out.

- Make sure you know the procedures to follow if a Code Yellow occurs when you are in the unit.
- Try to stay aware of what's going on in the unit while you're there – tension levels can escalate unbelievably quickly. Know when it's time to leave – you might sense that noise levels are rising, or that COs have a heightened sense of vigilance. Trust your instincts – high tension levels are usually obvious. If you are in any way unsure about whether you should stay in the unit, it's best to leave and come back at an appropriate time.

DISCLOSURE BOUNDARIES

When we develop relationships, it's natural to share information in the course of getting to know one another. We try to find common interests and experiences and we network to fit a new connection into our existing relationships. Our students, because they are denied outside contact, are perhaps in even more need of establishing relationships. We often hear that one of the reasons students come to class is to talk to someone new (the same stories get passed around endlessly on the units).

In the course of establishing a teacher-student connection, it's important to know in advance how much of your own self you are comfortable in sharing. My personal preference is to be known by first name only – even though our family name may be clearly visible on our ID tags – and though my students know I'm married and have kids, I decline to answer when they ask names, ages, schools and similar information. In my opinion, students don't need these details, and when they ask, I ask myself what they could do with that information. I don't know what all the encrypted codes on the Corrections movement list mean, but I have to remember where I am. As any parent, I am extremely protective of my children, meaning I don't share information about them or information that could be used to find any of us "on the outs."

Always respect students' boundaries – many will not want to share anything with you. This can crop up in course work as well as in discussion. The Family Studies 12 course, for example, has content (e.g., relationships, children) that can be painful for students to think and write about. Be careful when asking students details of their

lives even if it's just for a school registration form. This is a way of honouring them as human beings and allows them to be in control of what they wish to reveal about their stories/lives. Never ask about their crimes. In their descriptions of their crimes, there may be efforts on the part of the inmate to posture, boast, or intimidate, and a more productive approach may be to steer the conversation away from their criminal history, towards the invitation to be active learners, as is appropriate in a school environment. We are much more likely to connect with them when we work hard to respect their boundaries, and clearly establish our own.

Students often joke with us or try to get us to reveal information about our level of substance use. For example, they seem interested for some reason in whether or not we ever smoked marijuana. It can be tempting to reveal things about yourself or your past in an attempt to find common ground or even to "fit in." Again, depending on your relationship with students and your personal philosophy, you have to determine your own comfort level; as always, remember that you're first and foremost their teacher, and you don't want to compromise that. You are not equals with your students, even though you're all adults. You are separated by situation and you can't expect to really know or understand what life is like for an inmate. After all, as they often remind us, we get to go home at the end of the day.

A good rule to follow is that if you decide to disclose any personal information, have a purpose for your sharing. Providing details about your past and/or alluding to struggles in your own life should be done in a way that gives your students an opportunity to learn from your revelations. If you are going to humanize yourself for your students, do it in such way that it has a redemptive quality to it. Again, our focus should be to play a role in the rehabilitation of our students. Giving students juicy details about our past and telling them about our personal weaknesses just for the sake of engaging in small talk is unproductive.

We can summarize our discussion of boundaries in a few key points. We stress the importance of developing and maintaining a rapport with Corrections, choosing carefully the personal information you share with students, and respecting students' boundaries as well as your own (especially regarding space and personal details), in the unit and in the classroom.

Once you get to know them, show that you care about your students, but always remember that you are there to teach. The best thing you can do to be of service to your students is to help them get an education. There is enormous potential, through teaching, to be a catalyst for change and to be a positive, supporting force in your students' lives.

CHAPTER 3

Health and safety tips for Corrections educators

When working in a correctional centre, we have to be more vigilant about health and safety concerns than we would on the outside. These are related either to institutional policies, or to the fact that our student population has a higher incidence of mental or physical illnesses, some of which are contagious. Here are a few tips that would be useful to any person working in this environment:

- Never leave students unattended in the classroom.
- An educator working alone should never be alone with students of the opposite gender. Although assault is unlikely, you open yourself up to the possibility of accusations of harassment (or worse).
- Be careful not to silently approach or startle a student from behind.
- If you wear a personal alarm device, test it before each work day to ensure it is functional.
- Situational awareness: Always note your best route of exit when in an enclosed area with inmates, and train yourself to be alert to aggressive body language and/or tone of voice.
- Always let someone know your location and intended route.
- Keep personal information to yourself. Maintain an appropriate professional distance from your students.
- Be aware that it is inappropriate to ask students about the nature of their offences, court cases, inmate grudges, etc.
- Report all inmate behaviour that threatens institutional security or safety of individuals, or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Make sure that when you are around inmates, the materials you have with you are small, soft, few in number and not personal (keys, etc.). Remember that what appears innocent to you may be a potential weapon to an experienced criminal.

- If you are a smoker, do not carry cigarettes, lighter, or matches into the centre.
- Learn to recognize inmate “culture” – the beliefs, imperatives, etc. – of both the jail and the street. In some circumstances, this will make their behaviour easier to anticipate and understand.
- Beware of the “con job” – inmate attempts to manipulate you. Some inmates are highly skilled at this, despite their relative youth, their pleasant demeanour, or their appearance of vulnerability. In other words, always be wary if an inmate seems to be unusually friendly, or takes an unusually strong interest in you.
- Do not give or receive food, gum, or any consumables from inmates.
- Wash your hands often with soap and hot water, or antibacterial foam provided at entries to the centre and other locations, and use antibacterial towelettes, if available, especially after contact with inmates.
- Review safety and emergency policies and procedures regularly. Always follow them.

A correctional centre workplace, like other workplaces, requires that certain health and safety procedures be followed. For the most part, common sense is your best guide. There are, however, certain factors that are unique to this environment. This list is applicable to most, if not all, correctional centres, but also be sure to familiarize yourself with specific requirements at your own facility.

CHAPTER 4

Violence, abuse, addictions, and mental health issues as they relate to your role as educator and the student's role as learner

Violence is pervasive and it takes many forms. Violence causes trauma, and trauma gets in the way of learning. To really understand the effect that violence has on learning, visit www.learningandviolence.net. Some of the information in this section has been borrowed and adapted from that site, which also contains much more to help increase your understanding of the complex issue of violence and learning.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE

1. Violence is pervasive and takes many forms.

It is important to see the whole range of violence in one picture – including state and individual, public and private. Violence includes childhood sexual, emotional, and physical violence; domestic violence and stalking; rape and the threat of rape in the public sphere; dangerous working conditions; and state-sanctioned violence. Racism, ableism, homophobia, poverty, sexism, and other oppressions, such as those listed above, foster violence.

2. Different forms of violence are intertwined.

All kinds of violence build upon each other in one person's experience. When a person is made vulnerable by one form of oppression, each additional act of violence has increased impact and deepens the first violation.

3. Violence affects all of us.

All people are vulnerable to and shaped by the presence of violence. Whether or not we experience life-threatening violence directly, we all live with the possibilities and consequences of violence, and all women, and many marginalized men are diminished daily by society's acceptance of violence.

4. Violence is institutionally supported.

Violence is not only perpetrated by individuals; it is also

systemic. The institutions and systems of society support and allow violence to continue. When a court gives a suspended sentence to an abusive husband, when the limitations of welfare leave a person trapped in an abusive situation, when the only jobs available in a racist, sexist society do not allow a person to afford safe transportation, daycare or accommodation, institutions are perpetuating violence.

Institutions harm; we all participate in those institutions.

We cannot avoid participating in institutions that perpetuate the violence our society supports.*

* From: Take on the Challenge: A Source Book from the Women, Violence, and Adult Education Project. Boston: World Education (with revisions). Morrish, E., Horsman, J., & Hofer, J. (2002).

THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The vast majority of your students will have experienced trauma. The hidden impacts of trauma are ones that we all see in teaching. They are manifested in coping skills people have developed to function in the world, the tools they need to survive. These coping skills have been very useful; however, they may get in the way and take energy away from learning. They may also take energy to keep “hidden,” or at least to keep the reasons hidden. The symptoms of trauma will present themselves in the following manifestations:

- All-or-nothing attitudes
- Lack of presence
- Crisis mode
- Trust and boundaries
- Silence/disclosure
- Feeling down or lacking energy; tired or having poor concentration
- Having negative thoughts about yourself or the world around you
- Changes in appetite, sleep or weight
- Feeling worthless, helpless or hopeless.

For a detailed explanation of each of these manifestations, please visit www.learningandviolence.net.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE SUFFERING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Discuss incidents or episodes that have happened in your class or with your student. Find a colleague or other staff member to talk to immediately, before you begin suffering some of the above symptoms. Correctional centres all have trained Critical Incident Response Teams and they debrief staff involved in centre incidents. Contractors involved in these incidents are able to access these debriefing sessions along with correctional officers. Use your Employee Assistance Program with your school districts to see counsellors for more discussion.

ADDICTIONS

Addictions are often a symptom accompanying traumatic experiences. Many inmates struggle with addictions. As an educator, it is important for you to understand the effect that detox, withdrawal, and substance abuse have on learning.

Some of the students

- Are still sick and possibly still using drugs when they arrive at the school program;
- May need counselling and help in dealing with addictions;
- Are often distracted and lack focus on studies;
- Appear depressed, lethargic or disinterested in their surroundings;
- Suffer other symptoms as a result of using drugs/alcohol, which have the potential to create physical illnesses; or
- Are often identified by the health system of the facility and are taking medications on a regular basis to maintain a normal level of functioning.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

In most cases of addictions, the student may also be suffering mental health issues. In fact, some of these issues may have been the cause of the addiction in the first place. You may want to consult with the centre's mental health officer, assistant deputy warden, or deputy warden of programs in these cases. Most centres have a correctional officer assigned to work with inmates demonstrating mental health issues. Report your observations to these individuals or to Health Care through the duty correctional supervisors. It is wise, however,

to be sensitive to these issues, as most of us have no expertise in this area and need to be open and kind to the student, who may be suffering as a result of mental illness. Finally, as Gabor Maté suggests in his book *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, be creative, flexible and empathetic.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

- Refer to the centre's alcohol/drug counsellor or mental health worker. Advise the inmate's case manager (if available).
- Refer to AA or NA if there are meetings available for this student. (Often some of these extra resources are only available to certain designated groups.) Obtain brochures/literature from the centre's drug and alcohol counsellor for use in the classroom or from local drug/alcohol counselling groups, such as, AA or NA. Refer to the spiritual advisor in the facility for more intimate sharing (depending on the belief system of the student).
- Ask your mental health worker to see your students if you think there may be some underlying issues that led them to alcohol/drugs in the first place.
- Encourage journaling as a way of dealing with feelings and reflections around the addictions and what may have been their underlying cause.
- Encourage letter writing as a way to communicate with loved ones.
- Use art as a way of building self-esteem and as a way to explore feelings, hopes and dreams (hobbies or art programs are available in some facilities). This is especially useful for those students who have lower literacy skills and may feel more comfortable with this type of expression.
- Find self-help books for students to read while they are trying to sort out their feelings and perceptions.
- Honour information that the student shares with you, without trying to counsel them. Leave that to the professionals.
- Support students to help them understand what is happening to them: that what they are experiencing is a normal reaction

to drug and alcohol withdrawal. They may know about the physical effects of withdrawal but not understand and appreciate the effect that it has on the brain, learning, and memory.

- Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment that honours their experience.

Adapted from: *Saskatchewan Level 2 Drawing the Line Kit* containing the article "Dealing with affective issues in literacy" published by Saskatchewan Literacy Network, 2001, by Jenny Horseman. Available from www.sk.literacy.ca.

- Help students be kind to themselves. Help them think about ways of being a support to themselves. For example, if the student is a male [if the student is a female, read "she" in the following examples], what does he do when he hurts? What else could he do? What does he say to himself when he makes mistakes? What else could he say?
- Help the student avoid self-blame and shame: no violence is ever the fault of the victim. Give the message loudly and clearly: "It is not/was not your fault."
- Respect the student's choices. Don't blame, shame, or judge the student. You don't know best what he should or should not do. Notice your own language: If you are saying "You ought to..." or "You shouldn't..." you are suggesting you know what he needs.
- Hold onto hope. Support the student by holding the belief that he can learn; that he can make changes in his life, that he is not hopeless or stupid. Help him to see that he may have had difficulty learning because of the aftermath of violence, but he can still learn – in his own time, in his own way. Hold onto hope until he can come to hope and believe in himself. If you or he has difficulty holding onto hope, talk to a staff person or support worker to get help with this.
- Help him to find the supports he wants. Give him a clear message that he deserves the supports he needs. Give him a clear message about what support you can and cannot provide. Help him find a variety of supports to meet his needs. Does he want to talk out his experiences and struggles? If so, what options are available for him to talk with a counsellor, therapist, or other healer? Help him find someone with whom he can work. Help him to keep looking

if the first, second, or third resource doesn't work for him. Would he like to work through his issues in another mode, for example, with art, music, or drama? If so, are there any possibilities where he could do that? Help him find what is available. Does he have support from family or friends? Have experiences of violence led to other problems such as addictions or self-harming? If so, help him find supports that can start to address those problems.

- Be a “side support.” Check in to find out whether the supports he is using are what he needs; if not, help him to keep hunting for the right ones. Listen to how it is going. Offer encouragement that he can work through the issues he is struggling with. Remind him to be kind to himself. When you see change, help him to see it, too. Encourage him and remember to hold onto hope for him.
- Listen to his accounts of his pain only when you can do so without crossing the boundaries that are right for you. Not everyone can listen to pain. Think through whether you are able to do so, and if so, in what way?
 - Can you read about experiences of violence in the learner's journal or other writing?
 - Can you hear or read about the pain of having experienced violence (i.e. not the actual story but the pain that there is a story)?
 - Can you read published stories or watch videos that speak about experiences of violence with a learner who wants to see or read these?
 - Can you listen to details of their experiences? If so, what ground rules will you set in place and what supports do you have in place for yourself?
- Give clear messages to the student if, when, and how you can be a listener to his or her pain. If you cannot do this in the way that students need, make sure you help them find someone else who can.
- Attend to yourself and your needs. Balance the pain and joy in your life – make sure that you have joys, time in nature, ways to heal and let go of the pain you are aware of. Make use of the help of a support person – counsellor or staff person – to talk through how you are working with the student and how you are looking after yourself. If your own issues are brought up

through this work, make sure you have support to work through those issues.

- Hold onto the central focus of your interaction with a student, which is to SUPPORT LEARNING. Think about how everything you do and say supports the ability of the student to learn successfully.

CHAPTER 5

Teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

Although teaching in a provincial correctional centre is quite different from teaching in a regular school, there are several classroom management techniques that can be used with success in both places. Managing a Corrections education classroom, however, does present unique challenges due to students' different cognitive profiles and behavioral characteristics (Mottern, 2007).

As mentioned previously in this document, the situation in which educators at provincially-managed correctional facilities work in is different from a K-12 setting, an adult learning centre setting, and even a federal correctional setting. What makes this teaching different is the age of the students (older, of course, than secondary school, but generally younger than the federal student population); the student's volition to be in the program; and the length of stay in the education program (from six weeks secure/remand centres to six months in secure/medium/open custody centres). These differences, coupled with a myriad of complementary and confounding factors, produce goals different from a high school biology course or even a GED preparation program in a federal facility.

When establishing goals with students, you should consider:

- How much time the students will be in the program and the length of each class;
- The academic strengths and weaknesses of students and their academic self-efficacy (usually determined by an instrument such as the CAAT test);
- Students' psychological state, including their attention span, interpersonal skills, and anger- and frustration-management abilities;
- Educational and vocational plans the students have on release and their personal interests.
- Available classroom resources; and

- how many students are in the classroom and consequently, how much time may be available for one-on-one help for each student.

Once these factors have been considered and goals have been established, educators can begin to articulate a vision of what they want to do in the classroom.

CLASSROOM COMPOSITION & INMATE MODELING

Before the first student even arrives in your classroom, there is one specific thing you might be able to do to increase the probability of establishing a positive classroom environment: select the right mix of students – if you have the luxury of choosing them. Depending on your facility and the time of the year, you may have a waiting list of students. You can use this to your advantage by thinking carefully about which students should be together in a class.

I recommend classes have a mix of older (over-30) and younger (under-30) students. Quite often older students have a more serious attitude towards education (Hunsinger, 1997). When younger students are brought into the class, they will notice that the tone of the class is friendly but task-focused, so they are more likely to behave accordingly.

THEY'RE NOT KIDS, CONS, OR SMITHS –THEY'RE STUDENTS

When you were taking your teacher training, one of the things that you probably learned was the importance of learning students' names and using them on a regular basis (McLeod, 1995). Thankfully, because we do not have as many students as the average classroom teacher, we can learn names more quickly. When you are learning students' names, I suggest not using their last names, as that is usually how correctional officers refer to them. Instead, find out what they want to be called; usually it is just their first name.

If you are coming from a K12 classroom, you are probably used to being called Mr. or Ms. You may want to reconsider this term of reference. Also, you don't want to have your students call you "boss." This is sometimes used by older inmates usually reserved for correctional staff. Correctional staff members are usually referred to by inmates as Mr. or Ms.

Mutual respect developed with your students will achieve the appropriate form of address. If you are comfortable with it, I suggest having students call you by your first name. There really is no need to offer your last name.

One of the things you'll want to do (Nell Nodding, "Ethic of Care") is greet each student by name as they enter the classroom; you may also want to have a short, informal conversation about how things are going for them. Doing this will achieve a couple of things. First, it'll demonstrate to the students that you care about them as people. Second, it'll give you a good indication of their emotional state and their ability to work and learn on that day. For example, if you hear correctional officers are inspecting someone's cell while he is in class this morning, you can expect he may not be focused on the lesson. That being said, once you get to know the student over a longer period of time, if he is always giving excuses for not working, you can judge whether or not that student is being sincere in his studies and take appropriate actions.

REALISTIC DAILY EXPECTATIONS

As you may expect, there are many differing and even conflicting reasons why inmates may want to participate in the school program. Overall, their motivations are similar to most adult learners (Parsons and Langenbach, 1993). Once educational goals are established, you can think about what to accomplish in one period. Obviously, the length of a period is going to vary somewhat between our facilities and even within the same facility on different days. Disruptions such as a Code Yellow, a delayed inmate movement, or even a correctional officer forgetting to release a student for school on time reduces class length. Setting realistic goals for a period can help you plan accordingly and prevent frustration.

HUMAN CONNECTIONS & LEVERAGING SUCCESS

If you are a beginning Corrections educator, one of the first things you should do is to find something your students are good at (ideally academically) and let them know it (McLeod, 1995). As early as your first assessment of the student, whether it is through the CAAT test, a letter of introduction, or some other assessment device (I even use word searches and mapping assignments), find success within that person and acknowledge it. Being able to mark a student's first few assignments quickly and with specific, meaningful feedback is valuable.

Having immediate small-scale success bolsters student confidence and prepares them for the long road of learning ahead of them. This said, however, one should not lie to students and tell them their work is good when it is not. Neither should an educator pander to students' whims and requests – most of your students are in jail because of their thinking errors, one of which is a desire for continual and immediate response and self-gratification. Complying

with every student request may only reinforce their dysfunctional behaviour (Mottern, 2007).

After time, and with enough consistent work, many of your students will begin to achieve academic success, be it a passing mark on a spelling test or the ability to calculate long division. It is helpful for the educator, the student, and the rest of the class, to acknowledge and exploit the academic success (Hunsinger, 1997). When a student achieves success, you can use his triumph to help other students. For example, after a student gets a mark of 80 percent or more on a spelling test, you may want to use this student as your unofficial spell checker. When writing on the board or writing a memo to staff, ask this student how to spell a word. The student and class realize a few things by this positive exchange: first, the educator and so-called expert does not have all the answers; and second, the student has a new-found area of expertise that can be used to help people (perhaps the start of a personal transformation). Use student successes and expertise to create a climate of achievement. On a more pragmatic note, it can save the educator time by not having to deal with some relatively straightforward questions!

CAN WE TALK?

One of the things students will do in your class is talk. They'll want to catch up on the latest jail gossip. Rather than disallow it, you might want to budget 10 minutes or so at the start of class for them to make a cup of tea and chat. After this time, they can be reminded to begin working.

It is also, however, important to be flexible. If, for example, there has been an institutional disruption, it might be advisable to let the students chat for a bit more time before getting down to work.

OBSERVING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

Although letting students chat for a determined amount of time can be an effective classroom management technique, there may be times that they begin to chat about things that range from inappropriate to illegal, such as buying, using, or bringing drugs onto a unit, planning to fight another inmate, or their criminal plans for when they are released. This sort of conversation changes the tone of the classroom from a learning environment to an inmate "clubhouse." There are numerous ways to discourage inmates from inappropriate conversations. When you introduce new students to class, remind them that whatever they say in class is not privileged information. They need to monitor what they say. Inmates may ask if there are hidden cameras and microphones in the classroom. A useful response is, "Assume there are." Remember! If you hear

anything that threatens the security and control of the correctional centre you are obliged to report this to the correctional staff.

Sometimes, inmates become careless about their conversations. To remedy this, one of the things to do is listen intently to what they are saying, paying close attention to details. After a few minutes of “letting this go,” restate, in detail, what you have heard and from whom. Suggest this conversation isn’t suitable for your class. Informing them that you heard details of their plans heightens their awareness and makes them more cautious about what they say.

Another important time when monitoring student behaviour and conversation is critical is after an institutional incident such as a major fight, inmate escape, or a riot. This is when being sensitive to students’ moods is invaluable. Awareness of the vibe in your classroom may avoid further disruptions. When you sense things are not quite right, you do have the option to end class early. If the tone in the class is not quite as tense, you can deviate from your lesson. Focus on activities you know inmates like and are capable of doing well. You are benefiting the whole facility by taking a group of potentially disruptive inmates and occupying their time productively.

In addition to these options, sometimes it may be in the best interest of inmates and staff to not even call for class if there has been a major disruption. By knowing your students and how they might react to an event, you may realize that sometimes it is a better idea just to cancel class.

BETTER TO BE ZOPED THAN FU**ED

One of the ways students may become disengaged from learning is if they are given work that is much too difficult. Remember, one of the reasons these people are students in a correctional facility instead of a high school or a college is because of the poor emotional handling skills they may have (Mottorn). You don’t want to assign work that is much too difficult. It likely will frustrate them, causing them to act out or quit working, or both.

The Russian writer Vygotsky (1938) suggested the most productive time for learning is when the student is in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZOPED), a time when students are engaged in a learning activity just slightly above their present level. At this time, the student should be given timely support by the educator or another student who has mastered the material. This is a process known as cognitive apprenticeship.

A good example of cognitive apprenticeship happens when students prepare for their GED writing test. You might have three or four

students writing a practice test at the same time. Usually two of these students have some experience and success with this type of test. Rather than telling students to be quiet for the practice test, suggest if they have trouble, they should ask for help from either the other students or the educator. When students are given work just above their level, they tend to stay challenged, motivated, and on-task. And when these students receive timely and helpful advice they tend to acquire skills or information more readily (Lindner).

WHEN THINGS DO HEAT UP IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Despite careful planning, being sensitive to students' needs and the tone in your classroom, a correctional facility can be a volatile place in which to teach. It is wise to have strategies at hand to help de-escalate conflicts that may arise.

- Address the situation; however, choose words, tone, and manner very carefully. Try to avoid anything that is not empathetic and sincere.
- Adapt your conversation to students' educational and vocabulary level but do not use their jargon, which often has negative connotations.
- Speak slowly and softly.
- Ask open-ended questions. Use a technique called stalling: asking questions that cannot be answered "yes" or "no." If people are thinking of an answer, they are not thinking of how to escalate a situation. It creates time, which tends to calm a situation.

If you are unsure of what the person means, ask for clarification; don't make assumptions.

- Downplay what has been done so far. If nobody has been hurt in the incident, say so. If no damage or injury has taken place, say so. If there has been an injury and it is obviously not life-threatening, there may be opportunities to mention it in a way that helps to calm the situation. If property damage is only threatened but has not yet happened, there may be a way to bring that fact in to help calm things down. But remember: these openings only occur once rapport and dialogue have been established.
- Never use terms such as "calm down," as it tends to escalate the situation, no matter how "nicely" it is stated.
- Guard against the use of profanity.

- Assess the person's emotional state, rationality, and truthfulness. Obviously, a lot of this will come at the very start of, or even before, the situation. For example, if an inmate has a sharp instrument and is yelling that he's going to "cut the guy's head off," provided you have taught this student for awhile and are familiar with his general demeanour, you can better judge if the threats are just bluffs, or something more dangerous.
- Situations such as those mentioned above need to be reported to correctional staff, for the safety of the educator as well as inmates and staff.

TEACHER BURNOUT AND STUDENT METACOGNITION

Ever notice that about 20 percent of your students take up about 80 percent of your time? This is not a surprise. It happens in regular classrooms and in correctional facilities. One of our long-term goals as Corrections educators is to foster self-directed learning strategies for our students. Some students who show up in your classroom will undoubtedly have many of these skills already. These are students who seemingly know what to do most or all of the time. You don't have to spend time with them explaining directions or telling them what they are supposed to do. Many educators report that these students achieve the most academic success (Lindner, 1994).

Then there are the rest of them. These other students require consistent supervision and guidance. Research suggests these other students are not necessarily of lower intelligence but rather they lack metacognitive awareness and ability to take action when things start to go wrong or become difficult (Lindner). At the earliest indication of difficulty, they are either asking for help, acting out, or something else. If you are busy with another student, you can't immediately come to the rescue of the other student; that's when behavioural problems may surface. To rectify this problem, it would help to teach these students specific strategies so they can help themselves. Areas for them to address would include impulse control, self-monitoring, and the ability to express feelings in a socially acceptable way.

CONCLUSION

This chapter is not a comprehensive guide on how to teach in a provincial correctional centre. It is merely a starting point. The main advice is to begin with the end in mind. What is it, at the end of a class and at the end of the program, that you want to achieve with your students? Creating realistic, achievable, yet challenging and meaningful goals will help set the tone for your class. You are only one part of a larger team trying to make positive change with your

students. Other team members are case managers, A & D counselors, mental health officers, chaplains, nurses, psychologists, physicians, correctional officers, a myriad of volunteers, and others who offer programming in the centre. Don't isolate yourself. Speak with your colleagues and you'll find that together you all play a role in making change.

Once goals have been set, remembering to treat your students as students – not as inmates or criminals – and showing you care about their welfare in a holistic sense will enable you to create a personal bond to facilitate the learning and teaching process. Establishing this groundwork will help prevent problems in your class. Building and capitalizing on student successes, modeling metacognitive strategies, and manipulating class composition may also go a long way toward creating a harmonious classroom and, in the long term, a satisfying career as a Corrections educator.

EPILOGUE

Things you need to find out about in the first 30 days – or sooner

In this document we hope we have provided you with enough advice and guidance to get you off to a good, safe start working in Corrections. We have offered as much information as we can; however, there are some additional details that you need to find out for yourself, as they are specific to each correctional facility.

Questions you need to ask:

1. How do I find out about correctional policies at my facility?
2. How do I meet the staff and learn about their roles and responsibilities?
3. How do I learn about my record-keeping obligations?
4. Who will help me if things go wrong?
5. What are the procedures to be followed in the case of Code Yellows, etc.?
6. What is considered contraband?

As mentioned in the introduction, we hope that this booklet will help you make a successful transition to teaching in Corrections, and we wish you every success.

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CORRECTIONAL JARGON

An asterisk (*) preceding an item in this list denotes that the word is wholly inappropriate for an educator to use in the classroom, and should be avoided.

ADW – noun - Assistant Deputy Warden.

Beef – noun – a criminal conviction, i.e., “Good guy, bad beef,” meaning that although the inmate is liked by the other prisoners, his charges are egregious even to them. Sometimes used in combinations; e.g., a skin-beef = a sexual offence. Can also mean a disagreement between individuals.

***Bale** – noun – a package of loose tobacco.

Bit – noun – a sentence.

Brew – noun – homemade alcohol, usually made with a combination of fruit, sugar and water.

***Bug** – noun – a “crazy” person, a person with mental and/or emotional problems so severe that they cannot remain within general population, and require isolation in the “bug ward,” the psychological observation unit. Medications given to such inmates are sometimes called “bug juice.”

***Check-off** – transitive verb – leave the range; move to a different living unit. “He checked off,” or “We checked him off.”

***Cheese (someone) out** - transitive verb – inform on someone, report them, “rat” them out. “I never would’ve even come here if my girlfriend didn’t cheese me out.”

Chonie – noun – chocolate bar.

CO – noun – Correctional Officer. Other epithets and synonyms used by inmates include bull, pig, dog, cop, blue-shirt, boss.

CPIC – noun – a national computer information system used to do security checks and to determine outstanding warrants or charges.

CS – noun – Correctional Supervisor.

CSO – Conditional Sentence Order.

***Dad & Kid** – noun – a more common phenomenon in federal facilities than provincial, due to the relative lengths of the sentences, this is an arrangement of "protection" for a younger, less-experienced, smaller or submissive new inmate to be looked after by a larger, older, more aggressive and experienced inmate, who steps in when junior is in trouble, in exchange for sex.

Deuce-less – noun (pronounced as a spondee) – a sentence of two-years-less-a-day, the most time an inmate can receive before being required to serve their time in a federal facility.

***Diddler** – noun – a child molester.

Digger – noun – segregation cells.

ESP (1) – Employment Skills Program – a John Howard Society course that leads inmates who have been fired from a prison job back into work by walking them through expectations of the workplace.

ESP (2) – Enhanced Supervision Program, a phased program of re-integration from segregation to regular population.

***Finger** – verb – to inform or place the blame upon.

Gack – noun – crystal meth, methamphetamine. Sometimes called jib, speed, and a host of other synonyms.

Gated – when an inmate is served with new charges/warrants upon his release from a facility.

Good time – noun – earned remission credited, calculated at roughly one-third of the total sentence imposed by the court, so that an inmate is normally released at the end of two thirds of the original sentence, which would be the PROBABLE DATE of DISCHARGE (PDD).

****Goof** – noun – possibly the most negative term used by inmates to label others. Used as a trigger-word to start a fight. (Drop the g-bomb = call someone a goof).

Heavy – noun, verb – big guy on the unit, or intimidation by threat of or actual violence.

Hole – noun - segregation cells.

***Hoop** – noun, transitive verb – anus; means of smuggling contraband, by insertion in the anus/rectum.

Ice-cube – noun – someone who seems solid until they're put under a little heat.

INA – "Inmate Needs Assessment," done by case managers, to determine which programs are suitable or necessary for the inmate.

Institutional Charge – noun – an inmate who breaks the correctional centre rules and regulations may be charged. If found guilty of those charges, an inmate may lose earned remission, be placed in segregation, and/or be transferred to another facility.

Juice – noun, verb, adjective – steroids. Someone who is "juicing" is using steroids. Someone who is "juiced" is a steroid user, or is muscular due to their intake of steroids.

Juvie – noun – youth detention centre (YDC), juvenile correctional centre.

Kife – noun – prison coffee, often instant, implying low quality and poor taste.

Kite – noun or verb – a note surreptitiously passed to or from an inmate to another, or the action of doing so. Educators need to be aware of the illegality of participating in this kind of behaviour.

***Love** – noun – whichever mind-altering substance is available within the jail. Heard in phrases such as "There's no love in this place," "Get buddy to send me some love."

MDO – Mentally Disordered Offender (see bug).

No-contacts – noun or adjective - inmates that are incompatible with other inmates for a variety of reasons, and are not to be in contact with each other; or court-ordered isolation of individuals from specific other individuals.

***Orange** (or almost any common noun starting with the letter "O") – noun – an ounce (about 28 grams) of a street drug, i.e., marijuana.

PC – Protective Custody. Inmates removed from the general population, due to incompatibility issues, behavioural issues (debts, tattling), or the nature of their offence (sexual, domestic or child-related).

PDD – noun – Probable Date of Discharge.

***Rat** – noun or verb – tattle-tale, informant, collaborator.

Remission – noun – Every provincial inmate who is received in a facility upon sentence shall be credited with remission. For good behaviour, an inmate can earn one third of his sentence off.

Solid – adjective – loyal, especially as ascribed to one who will keep his mouth shut about another’s crimes, or who will aid/abet in criminal activity.

Shank, shiv – noun or verb – improvised stabbing/cutting device, or the action.

SHU – (pronounced shoe) Special Handling Unit. Depending on the correctional centre, this term has varied meaning. It is generally used to describe the unit that houses difficult to manage inmates, either as a result of aggressive behaviour, or displaying mental health issues.

Six up – expression of warning – there’s a guard coming. “Six on the go” = guard is walking around the living unit. To “have someone’s six” means to be covering their back, keeping an eye out.

***Skin-beef** – noun – a sex offence charge.

***Skinner** – noun – sex offender. A skinner-farm is a correctional facility that specifically holds sex offenders.

***Slide off** – verb or noun – Occasionally, an inmate needs to move away from a living unit and/or the general population over a disagreement with another inmate, debt, etc., and is able to opt for open custody, avoiding protective custody classification, simultaneously saving face and saving their hide.

***Squid** – noun – fool, lunatic, generally a pejorative term for someone relating to their stupidity or strangeness.

TA – noun – Temporary Absence – permission for an inmate to be absent from a facility for medical, humanitarian, or rehabilitative reasons.

Teemer (or TM or Cadillac) – noun – factory-made cigarettes, not hand-rolled.

***Tuna** – noun – a fresh fish, a new inmate ignorant of prison etiquette.

Units – noun – inmate housing.

***Waterhead** – noun – comparable to “squid,” someone repulsive because of their apparent cognitive/social issues, possibly referring to having “water on the brain.”

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