

MARCH 23, 2011

UNION UPDATE

State admits that prison teachers are right

Members fought 'flawed' rehabilitation model last year

After complaints from Local 1000's correctional teachers and an independent review, the state has admitted that changes implemented last year to prison education are a step backwards, do not prepare inmates for release and have left classrooms unmanageable for teachers.



"This validates what we've been saying all along, that cutting teachers and expanding classes will simply not work."

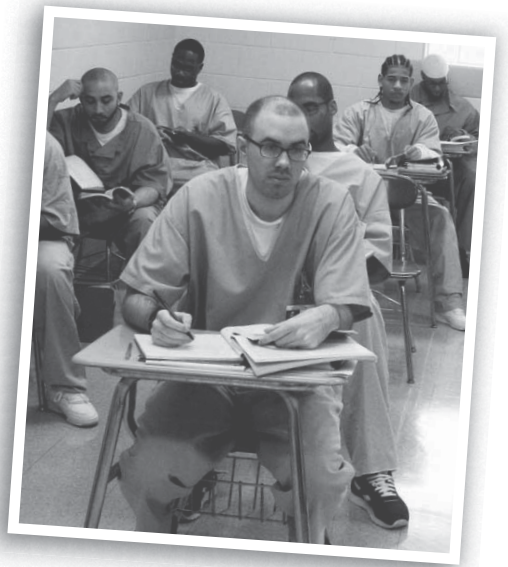
— John Kern
Chair of Unit 3 Educators

The new report by the California Rehabilitation Oversight Board listed numerous problems with prison education including "increased class size, reduced time in class, administrative paperwork, student turnover, wrongly assigned students, inmate homework, and elimination of some vocational education programs."

150-student classes

"This validates what we've been saying all along, that cutting teachers and expanding classes will simply not work, especially with an inmate population," said John Kern, chair of the Bargaining Unit 3 which pushed for the education review. "We told them that this new model would fail at rehabilitating inmates, they adopted it anyway—and we were proven right."

The new education model, which in some cases had classes as large as 150 students, was adopted last year as the state laid off 800 educational personnel in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), including 650 prison teachers.



Kern and other Local 1000 members argued that the larger classes were doomed to fail.

Numbers game

"It's a numbers game. It's not education," said Kern, a teacher with more than 25 years of experience educating inmates. "Prison classrooms resembled more of a train station than anything else, with all the trains running slowly or canceled."

Teachers sway board

The oversight board's scathing report drew on a Local 1000 survey of prison teachers. More than 80 percent said that most of their class time was spent managing paper work instead of teaching inmates.

But it remains unclear how CDCR will fix the broken rehabilitation system as the state grapples with a projected budget deficit of \$25 billion.

"Identifying the problem and admitting to the mistake is only the start," Kern said. "Rehabilitation will reduce recidivism and cut prison costs in the long run. But it requires a commitment up front."



Union History

100 Years Later: Remembering the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York City

One hundred years ago on March 25, a huge fire swept through the cramped Triangle Waist Company garment factory on the 8th, 9th and 10th floors of the Asch Building in lower Manhattan. Locked doors gave workers in the factory little time or opportunity to escape. The fire tragically killed 146 workers, including many young immigrant women and children—some as young as age 11.

It was the deadliest workplace accident in New York City's history and an event that helped change working conditions and led to the birth of garment unions that are the heritage of Workers United, an SEIU affiliate.

As the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire approaches, PBS and HBO are offering documentaries on the event that spurred on the modern union movement.

PBS's documentary on the fire and its galvanizing impact on America's social justice and labor movement aired recently. You can watch it online at pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/triangle

HBO's documentary "Triangle: Remembering The Fire" began airing Mar. 21. The film's executive producer is the great-niece of Celia Gitlin, a teenage Russian immigrant who died in the fire. The film focuses on interviews with descendants of the people who were there. Information about the documentary can be found at hbo.com/documentaries/triangle-remembering-the-fire

Workers United is holding an official commemoration in New York City at the former home of the Triangle Waist Company. Visit rememberthetrianglefire.org for more details, events and ways you can participate.



Resource Center

Monday-Friday
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
866.471.SEIU (7348)

Website

seiu1000.org

Connect with Local 1000

Facebook
facebook.com/seiu1000

YouTube
youtube.com/seiu1000

Twitter
twitter.com/seiu1000



Have lunch with President Walker

Join Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker online when Channel 1000 broadcasts live from Los Angeles on Thursday, March 24. The broadcast begins at 11:30 a.m. and runs continuously until 1 p.m.

President Walker is answering your questions in a town hall style format. Submit your questions and comments in advance at twitter.com/seiu1000, facebook.com/seiu1000 or email us at channel1000@seiu1000.org

CHANNEL
1000 LIVE

Channel 1000 LIVE
from Los Angeles

Thursday | March 24
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To watch, tune in to
seiu1000.org/channel-1000