

Executive Director's Message

By: Steve Steurer

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We have very bad news from California. The Department of Correction and Rehabilitation has officially laid off 800 of the 1400 teachers, as of February 28.

There is a lawsuit pending which alleges that the cuts violate state law. It may be decided by mid-March and that leaves us all some hope. The CEA office has been in continuous contact with teachers and their union during the crisis. The situation is not as bleak in other states. However, at the same time, lots of other states are implementing furloughs, job freezes, position cuts and other budgetary restrictions in corrections. In most cases, education is taking its equal share of cuts, but in California education and drug rehab programs took most of the cuts. CEA contacted and sought support from the correctional officers union, but my entreaty was turned down. The peace officers in California, historically, have spent lots of money to support political campaigns across the state. As a result their contracts have shielded them from any cuts. CDCR is really in a quandary because it has little choice but to cut programs, not security. All during my professional life security has been a friend and ally. Unfortunately, in California that is not the case.

On a more positive note the CEA Peer Tutoring continues to prosper and grow. At this writing, CEA is preparing to train about 80 correctional educators in Georgia from May 12-14. Each of the teachers will receive three full days of literacy training and return to their institutions with new skills, a training manual with over 400 pages of great materials, a DVD illustrating key

instructional strategies and CD that contains all the materials necessary to implement tutor training in their institutions. Several other states are in the process of considering peer tutoring as well. Please check out the CEA webpage for more information or contact me at CEA.

TLN is alive and well and is available in a new technology. Take a look at the list of inmate and staff training videos available in our ad in this newsletter. We are making many of the excellent videos that used to be on our satellite network on encrypted hard drives. And we will soon be offering many new videos as well. In addition, you will see the most popular of the National Institute of Corrections training programs. Both sets of videos are available on secure hard drives for a low price.

Hot off the press is the CEA *Teaching Problem Solving Strategies for Reentry*, a re-entry program which incorporates Drs. Bill Cosby and Alvin Poussaint's *Come On People* book that CEA distributed nationally during the last year. The workbook was piloted by the Ohio Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Ohio Central School System and Ashland University under the leadership of Drs. John Dowdell and Phil Amerine. Check out the CEA website for details.

These are tough time and we need to stick together. I hope that California is an aberration because of the power of the unions. CEA is a positive force but we need you to keep involved.

Concrete Steel and Paint Overview

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Since my earliest days working in prison education I have seen great examples of "inmate art." The visitors' rooms in many prisons are rendered less dismal and somewhat comfortable by the color and themes painted by inmates. It has always amazed me what artistic talent ends up behind bars. Over the years I have also come to appreciate the rehabilitative effect that education and art has on many individuals. It is the reason that I, and many other educators, have continued to work in corrections.

We receive a lots of e-mails and mailings at CEA asking to review and comment on the value of publications, software and other items. We are careful not to recommend or endorse something that may be a problem with some of our members. After receiving e-mails about *Concrete Steel and Paint* I hesitated, but I asked Cindy Burstein to send us a copy to view.

I can now tell you that *Concrete Steel and Paint* is a great contribution to the field of corrections and education. The film is not so much about inmate artwork as it is a demonstration of the power of art itself in all our lives. It told me how prisoners can learn to work together and humanize their environment and reach outside to the community at the same time. It showed me how inmates and victims can begin to communicate and discuss in a positive way, even though they may never agree or become friends. The artwork is beautiful but it is not the work of an individual inmate artist. It is a product of community. Art is the tool to build community. I never really understood that until now. "Community artwork" can help victims begin to understand those who hurt them, and heal a bit. Inmates can begin to feel the suffering caused by their crimes and start to repair the damage.