

2016-2018

# Impact of Improved Reentry Education: A Federal Grant Report



Community  
Education  
a service of **iu**13



# **Breakfast to Celebrate Improved Reentry Education**

**November 7, 2018**

**7:30 am-9:00 am**

## **Agenda**

### **Breakfast**

#### **Welcome and Overview of Project**

*Tim Shenk, IU13 Community Education Program Director*

#### **Data and Significant Findings**

*Wyman Fowler, IU13 Improved Reentry Education (IRE) Instructor*

*Mary Edith Leichliter, IU13 IRE Instructor*

#### **IRE at Lancaster County Prison**

*Warden Cheryl Steberger*

#### **IRE at Lebanon County Correctional Facility**

*Warden Robert J. Karnes*

#### **Success Stories**

*Frankie Saez, IRE Participant*

#### **Envisioning the Future**

## **IU13's Community Education Services for Justice-Involved People**

### **Overview**

*Low literacy and education levels among justice-involved people limit employment opportunities, diminishing their ability to support themselves and their families. This struggle with reading and limited learning increases reliance on public assistance and social services and limits ability to pay fines, costs, victim restitution, and child support.*

Since 1969, Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 has been providing educational services to justice-involved people to support this challenged population through adult education classes and high school equivalency testing services at Lancaster County Prison and Lebanon County Correctional Facility. They provide seamless follow-up and continuation in community-based classes, tutoring, and testing to ensure that people who started working on earning educational credentials while incarcerated have opportunities to complete them upon release. These classes have been funded through a variety of sources including federal grants and local contracts directly with the prisons.

### **PRSCOE and IRE**

In 2013, IU13 was one of three sites to receive a three-year US Department of Education grant under the PRSCOE: Promoting Reenry Success through the Continuity of Educational Opportunities initiative. In 2016, IU13 was one of nine to receive an additional three-year grant under the Improved Reentry Education (IRE) initiative. Both of these grants allowed the IU to experiment with instructional practices, develop connections with community providers of connected services, and create pathways to training and post-secondary education for justice-involved clients.

Over the two grant periods, IU13 developed and deepened collaborations with the RMO – Lancaster County's prisoner reentry coalition, PA CareerLink, Harrisburg Area Community College, Lancaster and Lebanon County Career and Technology Centers, and Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology.

Successful outcomes for our students in these programs included high school equivalency diplomas, occupational skills training (welding, metalcasting, CDL, forklift, and more), employment, and lower recidivism.

### **Key Learnings from the IRE Grant**

- Incentives are a powerful tool for encouraging engagement and learning
- One-on-one instruction increases the value of each educational hour
- Supporting our most vulnerable population through the process of seeking post-secondary training and employment dramatically improves their success rate
- Collaboration and partnership is essential

## Improved Reentry Education Outcomes: Correctional Education and Services to Returning Citizens

<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Contracted to Serve	<b>375</b>	95	120	160
# Served (1-11 Hours of Service)	<b>659</b>	154	170	335
# Enrolled (12+ Hours of Service)	<b>416</b>	109	136	171
High School Equivalency Attainment	<b>129</b>	22	39	68
Entered Postsecondary Education or Training	<b>138</b>	51	28	59
Education Functioning Level Gains	<b>47%</b>	50%	46%	45%
Recidivism Rate of Participants	<b>24%</b>	16.9%	18% (2-year rate)	24% (3-year rate)

2013 PA 1 year recidivism rate= 35%, 3 year=+/-60% (DOC only)

2013 Lancaster County 1 year recidivism rate=26%

### Lancaster County Prison HSE Diploma Data

	<b>Diplomas Earned</b>	<b># Men</b>	<b># Women</b>
<b>July 1,2016- June 30, 2017</b>	21	14	7
<b>July 1,2017- June 30, 2018</b>	33	18	15
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>+57%</b>	<b>+29%</b>	<b>+114%</b>

**Lancaster County Prison  
High School Equivalency (HSE) Class  
Incentive Program Data**

**Women's Attendance**

**Men's Attendance**

<b>Month</b>	<b>2016-17 Average Attendance (Before Incentive Program)</b>	<b>2017-18 Average Attendance (During Incentive Program)</b>		<b>Month</b>	<b>2016-17 Average Attendance (Before Incentive Program)</b>	<b>2017-18 Average Attendance (During Incentive Program)</b>
<b>November</b>	79%	82%		<b>November</b>	94%	85%
<b>December</b>	54%	100%		<b>December</b>	86%	92%
<b>January</b>	68%	96%		<b>January</b>	80%	91%
<b>February</b>	86.5%	91%		<b>February</b>	80%	77%
<b>March</b>	53%	94%		<b>March</b>	82%	92%
<b>April</b>	67%	91%		<b>April</b>	81%	87%
<b>May</b>	87.5%	87%		<b>May</b>	76%	90%
<b>June</b>	62.5%	95%		<b>June</b>	85%	84%
<b>July</b>	84%	90%		<b>July</b>	73%	85%
<b>August</b>	81%	94.5%		<b>August</b>	85%	93%
<b>September</b>	79%	86%		<b>September</b>	87%	87%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>91.5%</b>		<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>88%</b>
		<b>(+18.5%)</b>				<b>(+5%)</b>

# Improved Reentry Education Grant

## Success Stories

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Frankie Saez

Brian Carmichael

Michael McNamee

Cedric Waters

Natasha Khaliq

Joseph Gonzalez

William Vaskie



## The sky is not the limit

Frankie Saez had a dream.

“Growing up, I always wanted to work in the medical field, especially in the emergency room as an EMT or an RN,” Frankie says. “I love an adrenaline rush and I want to help people who can’t help themselves.”

But Frankie’s dream was at risk of fading away after he dropped out of school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and eventually wound up charged with a crime.

“I got down on myself. I thought now that I have a criminal record, no one will accept me,” he says quietly. “I was sure I wasn’t going to get anywhere in life with that kind of background.”

So, Frankie got a job working at House of Pizza in Lancaster, set aside his dream, and resigned himself to a life of struggling to make ends meet.

Fortunately his boss at House of Pizza and his parole officer at Lancaster County Adult Probation and Parole had other ideas. They saw real potential in Frankie.

“My boss told me, Go finish school. You can do this,” Frankie explains with wonder in his voice.

“My mom was pushing me to get stuff done too,” he adds. “She really wanted me to graduate.”

“Then the best PO in the county, Mr. Brown, stepped into my life and he told me, ‘You can be something. You don’t have to let this charge hold you back.’ Mr. Brown helped me see that I was capable of much more than I anticipated.”

Brown urged Frankie to go to CareerLink in Lancaster, where he met IU13 GED instructor Mary Edith Leichliter. Leichliter saw a spark in Frankie too.

The push from these key people in his life got Frankie thinking differently about his future. So in January, 2017, he set off on what would become a year-long journey to earn his high school equivalency diploma.

The road had a few bumps along the way. Frankie worked long hours at House of Pizza. Fortunately, he says, “My manager was very supportive in adjusting my schedule so I could do the GED classes at IU13.”

But there were times when Frankie worked late night shifts that kept him at work until 2 or 3AM and he just wasn’t able to get to morning classes.



“I always called my teacher, Mary Edith, when that happened to let her know I’m not gonna make it to class in the morning. But Mary Edith never let me down. She’d just say, “We’ll adjust. You’re not backing down from this.” And then she’d switch around my class schedule to make it all possible.”

With other people believing in him, Frankie started to believe in himself. After nearly a year of tutoring, classes, practice tests, and persistence, Frankie passed all of the required exams to earn his high school equivalency diploma, or HiSET, in December, 2017.

And in June, Frankie proudly donned cap and gown to participate in a formal graduation ceremony with IU13, making him the first of his mother’s children to earn a diploma.

Since graduating, Frankie has taken the next step toward achieving his childhood dream: he has applied and been accepted into the Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences Emergency Medical Technician program. He’ll start the year-long program in December.

“My mom is very proud and excited about what I’m trying to accomplish,” he says. “My main focus is to continue my knowledge into the medical field as far as I can.”

“My family and friends, my PO, my boss at House of Pizza, Mary Edith and people at IU13 and CareerLink – they never gave up on me. They just kept encouraging me and wouldn’t let me give up on my dream.”

Now, Frankie hopes that sharing the story of his struggles as well as his successes will inspire others to pursue their dreams too. He shares a mantra that he now follows – a quote from Marilyn Monroe. “The sky is not the limit. Your mind is.”

## A Foundation to Build On

Brian Carmichael knows what it's like to be homeless, hopeless, and struggling. Since both of his parents died when Brian was eight years old, he's had to navigate life for the past 22 years largely on his own.

"There were a lot of days when bad things were happening and there was nothing I could do about it," he says.



Brian struggled through school, then dropped out in tenth grade when he had nowhere to live. He worked at a lot of different temp jobs, trying to survive. And, in his words, he "did some stupid stuff and went to jail a couple of times for petty crimes." Finally, he says, "I thought, this isn't the life I want. I realized I had to be accountable. My parents dying when I was a little boy made me feel hopeless and helpless, but I realized I had to just stop getting in trouble if I wanted my life to be different."

The birth of his first daughter, when Brian was 26, gave him the drive and focus to start making changes. "Not having parents myself and then becoming a parent – I didn't know how to do it. So I just read everything I could and tried to figure it out. I know what I didn't have, growing up, and what I want to give to my kids so their life is different."

One of the books Brian read taught him a new word: perseverance. "I had never heard that word before, but this book said the only way to be successful is through perseverance and explained what it was. And I thought, yeah, that's what I have to have. That gave me a lot more hope to push forward."

He started thinking about how to create a financially stable life for himself and his daughter. "I thought getting my high school diploma would give me a foundation to build on," he explains.

When he had been at Lancaster County Prison, he'd heard of the GED program offered there, but because his stays at LCP had been for just a few weeks each time, he was never able to get into the prison GED classes.

"I guess that's a good thing," he says, with a wry smile, "that I wasn't in jail long enough to take classes." Fortunately, IU13, which runs the GED classes at LCP, also had a community-based GED program along with specialized services for students with a criminal background through a federal grant they'd received called the "Improved Reentry Education" or IRE program.

In early spring of 2017, Brian went to the CareerLink and completed many of the CareerLink's reentry employment workshops, then enrolled in IU13's IRE GED program. There, he met Mary Edith Leichliter. She provided 1:1 tutoring for Brian to prepare him for the rigorous set of exams that he'd have to pass in science, math, reading, writing, and social studies to earn his diploma.

Though the program gave him some hope, the struggles to make ends meet and survive day to day continued to hit Brian hard. "Life sometimes got in the way," he says, "but then I had to make some choices and take accountability to keep doing this. That's perseverance."

He continues, "Commitment matters. Some people will judge you for not showing up or not following through, but there are people like me who have obstacles after obstacles and we just need patience and understanding. That's why I appreciated Mary Edith so much. Even when I had problems and dropped away for a while, when I would pop back up and call her to start up again with the tutoring, she would just say, ok, great. Do you want to come in on Tuesday or Thursday? She never judged me. She just had pure intent to save a bird with a broken wing."

After a year and a half of perseverance, Brian passed all of the tests to earn his high school equivalency diploma on September 21, 2018, just two days after the birth of his second daughter.

He's philosophical about all of the struggles he encountered along the way.

"Even the people who closed doors on me helped me in a way because it made me really want to keep pushing to prove them wrong and prove they couldn't stop me," he says. "I don't hold grudges and if you don't want to help me that's fine, but I'm not going to give up. I've made a thousand mistakes in between all of that but every experience is just knowledge. Before I go to sleep every night, I think about what I did that day and what else I could have done different or better and I just learn from all of it."

Now, with his newly-minted diploma, Brian has started thinking about what's next. "I can see kids younger than me struggling and going through the same issues I went through and I want to be able to help them," he says. So he's hoping to enroll in Phoenix University.

"Now I need someone to help me figure out how to do college. I want to have a small business to help other people, and be able to hire people who need some help. I just feel like I really want to give back and also be able to make some money to support my daughters. You need more than just a positive and ambitious attitude. I just want to make myself a good helper for other people who really want to do good for themselves too."

When his official diploma arrived in the mail, Brian kept it unopened in the envelope. He's waiting for the right moment and the right way to celebrate his accomplishment.

Regardless of when that moment of celebration comes or what form it might take, he's confident that having his diploma will make a difference for him.

"Opportunities will come and I'm just more optimistic now," he says. "This will give me a foundation which I never had – to build anything I can dream of."

## From Flipping Burgers to Pouring Iron

Michael McNamee needed a fresh start.

“I was a troubled young kid that drank and used drugs and acted out,” he explains. “I had no guidance and didn’t have proper medication to help with my bipolar. I kept relapsing and getting in trouble with the law. I needed to get out of Delco where I am from and start a new life.”

Michael found the opportunity he’d been hoping for when he met Brad Weaver, Community Education Instructor for IU13. Brad provided adult education services at The Gate House for Men, a recovery house where Michael was living temporarily, trying to get on a new path. Michael had been working at a dead-end, low-paying job flipping burgers at a fast food restaurant and thought, because of his past, that was his only option.

Brad told Michael about a job skills training program in metal-casting offered through Thaddeus Stevens College that could lead to a good-paying job and a real career path.

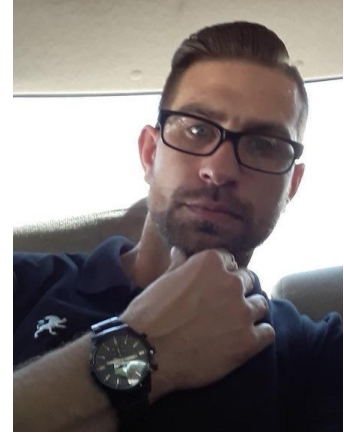
Michael jumped at the opportunity and immersed himself in the intensive three-week program, going to classes every day from early morning until late afternoon. A local foundry sent a hiring manager to the graduation ceremony for students who completed the program. Michael talked with them about job opportunities with their company. Two weeks later, he traded in his fast-food cloth apron for a protective aluminized apron for his new job as an iron pourer at the foundry.

He’s worked there for over six months now and is excited about his career future. “They have all types of opportunities to move up and people tend to have long careers there,” he says.

Michael credits Brad Weaver for encouraging him toward this new path.

“Brad really wants to help people and took this process very seriously. He has helped a lot of guys at Gate House and has been a reference for me. I point other people in his direction,” Michael says.

“What a difference,” he concludes. “This was a great opportunity that they have a program like this for people like me who have made mistakes in our past. I’m very grateful for this opportunity to get back on my feet.”



## **Drive to Succeed**

Cedric Waters had a successful 20-year career as a commercial truck driver. Then his life and career took a detour when he was battling addiction and wound up in jail. After his release, he found that his criminal record presented a lot of roadblocks, and he couldn't find an employer that was willing to hire him to do commercial driving. And in the meantime, his commercial drivers license expired.

Since he needed income to start paying off his court fines, he settled for a minimum-wage job at a coffee shop, but knew that wouldn't be a sustainable long-range option to support himself.

Cedric also knew he needed to get back on the right road with regard to his addiction. So, he went into a program at a recovery house called The Gate House for Men. There, he met Brad Weaver, Community Education Instructor for IU13. Cedric told Brad about his dream of getting back behind the wheel.

Because Cedric's CDL license had expired, he'd knew he'd have to go through a CDL training program again. But it had been years since Cedric had done any schooling, so Brad provided some tutoring for Cedric in basic writing and math skills. Then, Brad helped Cedric look into CDL programs.

"Brad helped doors to open for me," Cedric says. "Everything he said he was going to do, he did, as far as helping me to find a program and get in. He did what he could do for me and now the rest is on me. I have to stay persistent."

Cedric got into a CDL training program at Lancaster County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC) and his persistence soon paid off. He completed the CDL program in short order and soon afterward, he got his license back.

"Now I just need to find an employer who's willing to hire me," he says. He has applied to numerous employers, but has received a rejection from everyone. It's gotten discouraging, he admits.

"I'm just looking for a light of hope," Cedric explains. "I know I screwed up. I've made a mistake, am paying off my fines. I want to have the opportunity to come out here and earn a living and support myself, so I'm just trying to put my best foot forward."

He mentions an upcoming interview and his drive to succeed.

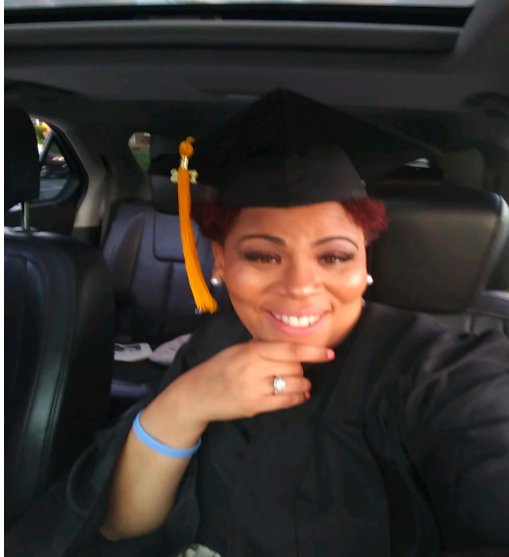
"I appreciate the fact that I now have my license and am still in the game," he says hopefully. "Maybe this next employer is the one who will give me a chance. I have to just hold onto that light of hope."

## **A Light at the End of the Tunnel**

Teenage mother. School expulsion. Prison time. These roadblocks, and more, slowed down Natasha Khaliq's dreams, but did not stop her.

Today, at the age of 37, she has been accepted to Lancaster County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC) for Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) training--her dream since she was 15.

Enrolling at LCCTC first required that Natasha earn a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, which she did after five months of tutoring through IU 13 Community Education's Improved Reentry Education (IRE) program at CareerLink. (In 2013, Natasha had been one subject test away from earning her HSE when the GED test changed, forcing her to start over again).



Working with her IU13 instructor, she also learned about career and training options, so that on the Monday after Natasha earned her HSE, she knew her next steps and enrolled in Community Education's Pre-LPN classes. There, she learned the skills and knowledge necessary to pass LCCTC's nursing entrance exam (Test of Essential Academic Skills) in May 2017 and register for the 18-month training program.

Going to CareerLink to earn her HSE was not easy for Natasha; she was in constant pain from a recent surgery and juggling the roles of wife, mother, and student. She notes that her IU13 Community Education teacher was immensely patient: "That's what I love about her. Every time when I was in a lot of pain she was understanding and patient. Miss Mary and I had not just a teacher connection--I felt a spiritual connection with her."

Natasha acknowledges that work injuries, surgeries, parenting, and the loss of her brother resulted in depression, and she wants to encourage others going through similar struggles:

"Never give up on life regardless of how dark it is; there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. The help is there. Do not give up on yourself."

## When You're Sad, Keep Pushing

"I passed math because of her," relates Brooklyn native Joseph Gonzalez about his IU 13 Community Education instructor. Joseph needed to earn his High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma in order to move to the next step: become a union ironworker.

After three years in prison and a lifetime of struggles, Joseph moved to Lancaster where his parole officer encouraged him to contact the Reentry Services office at CareerLink. With the support of Reentry Services, Joe completed welding training at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology. But to enter the union, he needed to earn his high school equivalency (HSE) diploma.

The reentry office connected Joe with IU13's Community Education program, where he studied for five months with his IU instructor in the Improved Reentry Education (IRE) program and earned his HSE. Joe joined the union and became a certified welder.

When Joseph reflects on his past, he shares that he learned from his mistakes and advises others, "Just because you fell all the way to the ground doesn't mean you can't get up. For every 10 steps you fall, jump up 20 steps. You might have times when you're sad, but keep pushing."

Joseph acknowledges that the transition from New York to Lancaster has not been easy, but shares that as a hard worker he appreciates that "everything is a lesson learned."





## Forging Your Future

Today, William Vaskie is featured on billboards in Lancaster County. Two years ago, he was in state prison.

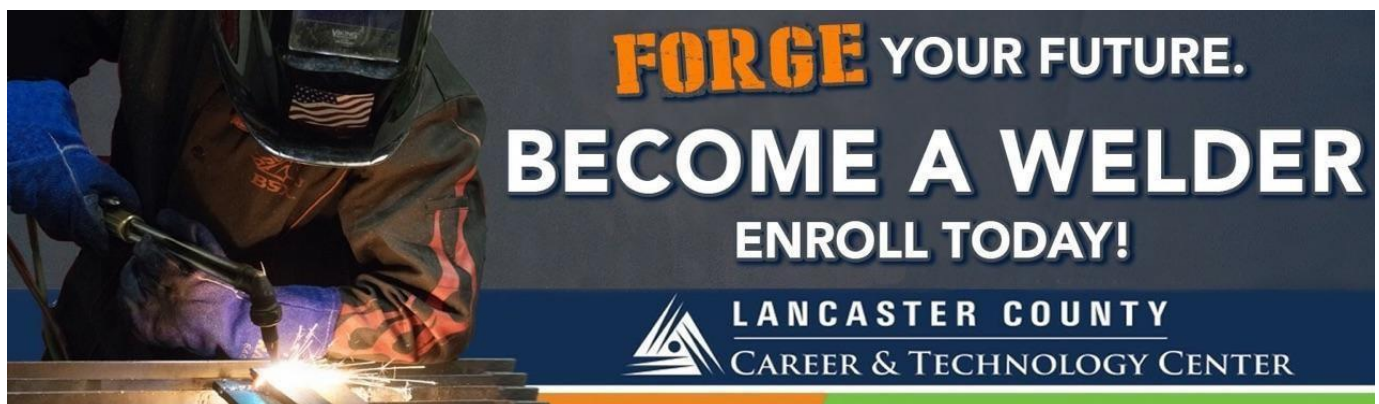
Like many adults exiting prison, Bill was not sure of his next steps. “I just wanted to have a normal life. I wanted to have a house, a family, and a career—something I never had before.” A conversation with his parole officer led Bill to Lancaster’s PA CareerLink where he earned his GED through IU13 Community Education’s Improved Reentry Education (IRE) program just three weeks later.

Next, he enrolled as a full-time student in Lancaster County Career and Technology Center’s (LCCTC) welding program where his tuition was funded by the IU’s IRE grant. After one month of school, he was offered a co-op—he works as a welder in a manufacturing company every day and goes to school for five hours twice a week after work.

In the meantime, Bill became a celebrity when LCCTC photographed him while in training and used the picture on billboards to advertise their welding program.

With just a few months remaining in his training, Bill reflects on his past and advises folks who face re-entry: “I felt like nothing was going to change. And it wasn’t easy. But you have to go out and get it. Your past is behind you. You gotta live for now.”

Bill is a testimony to learning about the possibilities and pursuing them. “I love my job and I’m looking forward to finishing school! Go with your heart and passion. Anything is possible!”





Adult Education  
Services for  
Justice-Involved  
People

# Community Education

a service of **iu13**

Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13  
has been providing  
adult education and high school equivalency services  
to justice-involved people for nearly 50 years.

IU13 started offering classes at Lancaster County Prison in 1969,  
and at Lebanon County Correctional Facility in 1972.



## PRSCEO

2013 - 2015

IU13 received  
1 of 3 PRSCEO  
grants awarded  
nationally

51  
GED grads



44  
Post-Secondary  
Training/Education



PRSCEO participants' Recidivism Rate: 16%\*



## IRE

2016 - 2018

IU13 received  
1 of 9 IRE  
grants awarded  
nationally

129  
GED/HiSET  
grads



138  
Post-Secondary  
Training/Education



IRE participants' 1-year Recidivism Rate: 17%\*

\* Recidivism comparison data:  
2013 PA 1 year recidivism rate= 35%, 3 year=+/-60% (DOC only)  
2013 Lancaster County 1 year recidivism rate=26%



