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NY inmates getting better educated while locked up

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ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - Corrections officials say most inmates arriving at New York prisons haven't finished high school, while those taking the GED equivalency test are passing at a 70% rate.

Commissioner Brian Fischer told lawmakers Thursday that 43% of New York's 55,000 inmates lack a verified high school education, including 61% of those admitted in 2011.

He says an average of 18,000 inmates were enrolled in academic programs earlier this year, with another 12,500 in vocational shops. He acknowledged both funding constraints and waiting lists.

Last year, 3,199 inmates took the GED and 2,242 passed. Meanwhile, 88 inmates earned associate's degrees, 40 earned bachelor's degrees and 13 got master's degrees.

The Correctional Association, an advocacy group, says teacher staffing has fallen faster than the inmate population and suggests expanding peer education.

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