

FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED

The GED Testing Service® in Washington, DC, sent representatives to Arkansas in March to conduct focus groups with current GED® students in Russellville, Ft. Smith, Conway and Little Rock. The purpose was to get feedback on the value of a GED® diploma and what students might be willing to pay for the preparation, testing and diploma in the future.

Focus groups were only conducted in Arkansas and Oregon, said Beth Barrett, product marketing specialist from the GED Testing Service®.

"We chose Arkansas and Oregon for our focus groups because we wanted to use states where we thought the administrators and students would be open for a discussion," said Barrett.

"We frequently get anecdotal input from teachers and students all around the country, but we wanted to get more information in a controlled environment, specifically about the pay structure concepts we're considering for the 2014 test."

How those concepts will play out in Arkansas is still under development.



Focus group participants from Russellville Adult Education Center.

Dumas Adult Education Catering to Student Needs

Dumas Adult Education Center under the direction of their new adult education center director, Dr. Judy Hubbell, wishes to create a warm and welcoming environment while providing instruction to meet individual needs. Dr. Hubbell and her staff work with a variety of community and church leaders and organizations to reach out and encourage individuals to take advantage of the many opportunities provided at their center.

Goals for the center include:

- Increase enrollment. Churches are contacted to encourage their members to attend who need adult education services. Working closely with military recruiters and the court system also helps to accomplish this goal. Flyers in English and Spanish are posted in various businesses throughout the community to increase awareness. A Facebook page with a photo gallery has also been developed.
- Improve WAGE lab. Efforts are being made to obtain refurbished equipment.
- Upgrade equipment in instructional programs
- Improve student retention. Not only is instruction individualized to meet each student's needs but when absences occur, staff at the center call to check on the student.



Paul Jamison instructs students Leola Cobb and Ruthie Bess.

Inset: Judy Hubble, Director.

Below: GED® Examiners, Flora Simon and Charles Taylor.



Hubbell reports that teachers and staff at the center have the "heart" that is needed to reach students with an array of problems and issues. Lines of communication are kept open with parents and guardians as well. Information is provided to students about careers and jobs in local industry and instructors try to make their learning relevant to the student's world. Students appreciate and enjoy the hot lunch that they receive while attending classes at the center.

"We want to make steady progress going in the right direction," states Hubbell. "Most of our students have not had good school experiences and we want to change that by providing a warm and welcoming environment."

CALENDAR ITEMS

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| APRIL 2-5 | NATIONAL STATE ADULT EDUCATION DIRECTORS' MEETING (WASHINGTON DC) |
| APRIL 10-13 | COABE (NORFOLK, VIRGINIA) |
| MAY 8 | TOP 25 GED® SCORERS' RECOGNITION CEREMONY (OLD SUPREME COURTROOM/STATE CAPITOL BUILDING) |
| MAY 8-9 | ADULT EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS' MEETING (AALRC/LITTLE ROCK) |
| MAY 24-25 | WAGE™ RETREAT (MT. MAGAZINE) |



The Arkansas Department of Career Education funds the Adult Education Division. The Adult Education Division provides programs and services statewide.

A Community Story

*Submitted by Yvonne Dougherty, Director,
Saline County Adult Education/Pulaski
Technical College*

Hensley is a small rural community on US HWY 530 between Little Rock and Pine Bluff. It intersects at the corners of Pulaski, Saline, and Grant counties. It is a pocket of poverty set in the midst of dense woods. Most residents don't have adequate housing or transportation, and educational and job opportunities are lacking. The only grocery market is Cook's Grocery, owned and operated by my sister, Annette Cook.

On Christmas Day of 2011, my sister invited me to come help serve Christmas Dinner to her community at the store. I agreed and, before long, was inundated with requests to "please" place a GED class at the store for the residents because they didn't have transportation to any adult education center. I agreed to start a class the next Saturday, Dec. 31, 2011. Five students showed up and registered. Since then, about 15 adults, hungry for an education, have joined the class. Saline County Adult Education Center donated old texts and an anonymous donor from the community has supplied paper, pencils, rulers, notebooks, etc. Annette cleared two grocery shelves to host the old GED texts and materials and set up two desks with computers that are Wi-Fi connected to the internet. Annette also hosts a community library in the back of her store where residents can come and check out donated books. Students can come into the store and study with the books or computer resources anytime they want. Some students have put in as many as 30+ hours on the online software programs.



Jeremiah England is the first student to take the official GED test from the group. Jeremiah is hoping that he will score 600 on the GED and earn the full-tuition scholarship to Pulaski Technical College. He was laid off from his job last fall and then his old truck broke down, so he, his wife, and two boys (one a baby) have been without transportation for a few months. Jeremiah has often walked to Cooks Grocery (about a mile away from his home) to study. He has recently traded off some work with a neighbor to get his truck working. If he earns the scholarship, he plans on studying HVAC. The community has talked about chipping in to help him with transportation costs to college. He will probably be eligible for a PELL Grant. If his official scores are anything like his Practice Tests scores, he should earn that scholarship.

High Scores and High Pass Rate at ASU Mountain Home Adult Education



Photo from Baxter Bulletin website.

Earning a GED® diploma changed Cassaundra Shutts' life. Taking the test at ASU Mountain Home Adult Education Center, her score tied as the 24th highest score of the 7,129 people who passed the test in 2011.

Cassaundra left high school two years ago in her senior year. A drop in her attendance due to illness resulted in a drop in her grade point average and her confidence. The motivation to get back on track came with the birth of her son.

Awarded a two-year scholarship to ASU Mountain Home, she is now studying for an Associate of Arts degree. Cassaundra plans to transfer into dentistry school with the goal of becoming an orthodontist.

Joshua Cox, another 2011 GED® graduate from ASU Mountain Home Adult Education Center, tied as 25th highest score. According to Carolyn Moody, director of the center, 102 students tested at the center last year; the center boasts a 94 per cent pass rate. Moody credits the high passing rate to the centers dedicated staff—including instructors Peggy Dukat and Nancy Tester.

The center offers instruction in English as a Second Language and basic math and language skills. Enrollment at the center is up with the increased need for a diploma to enter the workforce.



State Senator Johnny Key and State Representative Karen Hopper with ASUMH Adult Education Center Director Carolyn Moody (center) at her recent retirement celebration.

The Russellville Adult Education/WAGE™ Program has collaborated with the Arkansas Department of Community Correction (Probation/Parole) in Pope County to provide classes to clients at the local facility. Secured internet service has provided clients the opportunity to access online adult education curriculum that is individually designed by the instructor to provide appropriate training to each client according to their assessment results. Clients are also provided with workbooks, workshops, and individual tutoring in the classroom. The class is provided for drug court, probation, and/or parole clients who are court-ordered to obtain their GED® diploma or employability skills.



Jackie Harris, WAGE Coordinator/Instructor, William Titsworth, Drug Court Agent, and Carrie Williams, Assistant Area Manager for Community Correction, are pictured in the classroom provided at the facility. Mrs. Harris reported that since the beginning of the program, 31 clients have been assessed, and 24 have been enrolled in classes. "I believe that we will soon have our first GED graduate and hope to have several at this year's graduation in the spring. We at Adult Ed and Community Correction are proud of the accomplishments of our students and the efforts they are making to achieve their goals."

