

Student Inmate Plans for Future



Above: Benjamin Berry, GED- Examiner, administers test to a student inmate.

The Omega Unit in Malvern is part of Arkansas Community Corrections and is a facility for those who will be incarcerated for a short time. GED Administrator Janice Hanlon interviewed an unnamed inmate who has been at Omega for seven weeks and will go home in three weeks. The inmate was sent to the correctional facility because he sold drugs.

"I am trying to get my GED," stated the inmate. "I want to go to v-tech. My plans are to live with a friend and go in a different direction when I'm released." Having been on his own since he was 16, the inmate not only has himself to think about but has three children which he needs to help support.



Arkansas Correctional School System Helps Students to Overcome Educational Barriers

The Arkansas Correctional School System was established in 1973 by the General Assembly making a school district within the Arkansas Department of Correction. The purpose as stated in the act was to provide "elementary, secondary, and vocational technical education to all persons incarcerated in the Department of Correction facilities who are not high school graduates, irrespective of age..."

The system is comprised of 21 school sites and has made consistent progress over the years in providing adult education services. Those inmates who do not have a high school diploma or GED diploma must attend school—normally about twenty hours a week. Inmates may also earn "good time" for passing the GED tests which allows for an earlier release time.

The barriers for inmates returning to society are many. They are released with \$100 and the odds of finding a good job, a place to live, and having stable family support are slim. Passing the GED tests is a step in the right direction and opens doors to a better job or postsecondary education.

At the Ouachita River Correctional Unit in Malvern, Principal Jason Smith says "the challenge is to reach the students' minds with the restrictions and limitations that are placed on a correctional facility. We try to have as much school as possible safely. Having a GED diploma puts the released inmate on a more level playing field in society."

Faculty and staff of the Arkansas Correctional School system are a dedicated group of individuals. They must not only adapt to the confining environment but the various emotional and psychological problems of the inmates.



Above: Student inmates attend adult education classes.

Below: Jason Smith, Principal, Ouachita River Correctional Unit reviews attendance for center.



Student inmates benefit from one-on-one and classroom instruction.



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

Arkansas Correctional School GED Testing Rates	Tested	Passed
2007	1,184	819
2008	1,463	1,016
2009	1,268	867
2000 - 2009	10,442	8,463





Student Spotlight: Mireya Mondragon

Dumas Adult
Education Center

Mireya Mondragon, a young Hispanic mother, enrolled at Dumas Adult Education Center in hopes of obtaining her GED certificate. She was faithful about attending except on days of inclement weather—that is how the staff realized she was walking to class most days. Dumas Adult Education Center Director, Tammy Healey, and the center's secretary took turns picking Mireya up on days when the weather was bad.

Healey tells the rest of the story: "While attending school she was looking for homes to clean or yards to rake to make money. Right before we got the result from the latest testing, the local elementary school called wanting to know if we had anyone who had a GED diploma and would be interested in an ESL/Migrant paraprofessional position. I told them about Mireya, and they were very interested because speaking Spanish would be a plus. We crossed our fingers that the results would come in and be favorable. While we waited we allowed her to come up and do the PRAXIS tutorial on line at our center. All paraprofessionals must pass the PRAXIS Assessment in order to be hired in the public schools. When the results came back that she obtained her GED diploma, she went the next day and took the PRAXIS. Her results were immediate and she passed with flying colors."

Healey says, "Mireya's interview with the school's superintendent was so impressive that he encouraged her to start taking classes to become a licensed teacher. She came in to my office and with tears in her eyes, hugged me and stated, 'I don't have just a job...I have a career!'"

COABE Proliteracy Conference

State staff members Ralph Edds and Sherry Brown, along with representatives from Arkansas Adult Education programs and Literacy Councils, attended the 2010 COABE (Commission on Adult Basic Education) Proliteracy conference held March 15-19 in Chicago, Illinois. Program directors and teachers were able to choose from many workshops and hear noted speakers including Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary, Office of Vocational and Adult Education; Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary of Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor; and Scott Simon, National Public Radio correspondent.

Arkansas' Leadership Excellence Academy, Certified Managers of Program Improvement graduates were honored at a reception held during the COABE conference. The twelve recipients hold the prestigious distinction of being among the elite adult education leaders in the country to earn this national certification.



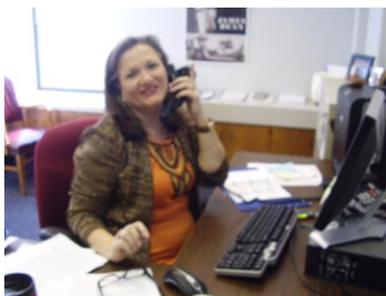
Leadership Excellence Academy,
Certified Managers of Program
Improvement:

Debbie Faubus-Kendrick
(seated), Carolyn Moody, Kathy
Spigarelli, Elizabeth Thompson,
Darla Melton, LEA Trainer
Stacey Wright, Sherry Brown,
Gail Shrum, AALRC Professional
Development Coordinator
Nancy Loftis, AALRC Director
Marsha Taylor, Patricia Bates,
and Becky Linsky

COABE 2010 Conference presentations and workshops notes can be accessed at <http://coabe.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=proDev>.

TESOL Conference

From March 24 to 27, 2010, more than six thousand teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) met in Boston, Massachusetts for TESOL's 44th Annual Convention and Exhibit. Dr. Philip Less, ESL Coordinator, represented the Arkansas Adult Education Division at this year's convention. Dr. Less attended several workshops and colloquia dealing with teaching strategies and the new citizenship exam. In addition, Dr. Less is the Chair-Elect of the Adult Education Interest Section (AEIS) which acts as the representative group for all teachers of adult English language learners. Between AEIS meetings and TESOL sessions, Dr. Less had the opportunity to meet with Gail Weinstein and Laurel Pollard, teacher trainers who have conducted workshops in Arkansas for the Adult Education ESL Summer Institutes.



New State Program Advisor

Sherry Brown is the newest Education and Instruction Coordinator in the Adult Education Division. Brown brings five years of experience as a local center director to the state staff pool of expertise. She is assigned to the southwest region of the state.

Brown says, "I plan to visit each program to get to know program history, build rapport with each director, and provide support from the state office. If there is any way that I can be of assistance to you please do not hesitate to call 501.682.1970. I look forward to meeting with each of you soon!"