

## Fort Smith GED® Testing Staff



- Kaye Birkhead, Chief Examiner
- Linda Wight, Counselor and Examiner
- Marcia Dye, Office Coordinator and Examiner
- Gary Udouj, Center Director and Examiner
- Janice Hanlon, GED Testing State Administrator



Fort Smith instructor Sandra Newhart and student Tuyet Phan.

Thirteen years ago Tuyet Phan came to this country from Vietnam. She attended ESL classes and got a job in a local company which has now closed. In 2008 she earned her Arkansas High School Diploma through the Fort Smith Adult Education Center. She now plans to enroll in college and take business and accounting classes.

Fort Smith Adult Education students find the center meets a variety of needs in a variety of ways.



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## Fort Smith Adult Education Growing to Serve the Needs of Diverse Populations

The Fort Smith Adult Education Center is “growing by leaps and bounds” according to Director, Gary Udouj. Approximately 360 more people have been served since November than during the same period last year. The center offers a range of services from a Career Readiness Certificate program to computer and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes along with a Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy™ (WAGE) Program, GED preparation and testing. Care and a learning environment are even offered for students’ infants and pre-kindergarten aged children.

With company layoffs and downsizing at area companies like Whirlpool, Trane, Jarden Plastics, and Riverside Furniture, dislocated workers are going back to school to improve job skills, earn their GED diploma, or prepare for new careers. Fort Smith Adult Education works in tandem with the Governor’s Taskforce on Dislocated Workers, the Department of Workforce Services, other agencies and affected companies to help individuals as they work to advance their skill sets and academic achievement. The center recently received a \$22,000 grant from WalMart to start a career readiness center.

For many—even those who are college bound—the center assesses their math, reading and language skill levels and helps with remediation to raise those skills. The center also partners with the Fort Smith Literacy Council to help students when one-on-one tutoring is a better fit for service. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is another partner for the center.

Fort Smith Adult Education operates a number of outreach locations in the community and in local businesses and industries. The center was also chosen as one of the state’s twelve distance learning sites; the distance learning instructor, Micaela Shropshire, says those slots are “filling up as fast as possible”.

Offering services to a diverse student population in equally diverse ways is key to the center’s success. Fort Smith Adult Education excels in working with individuals at their current point in life and helping them move forward.



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



*“In a transitional time for workers, the WAGE program is in a prime position to improve the skills of our workforce. As our economy turns around, students will be in a good position.”*

**Cindy Iglesias, WAGE, Career Readiness Certificate Instructor  
 Fort Smith Adult Education Center**

## Literacy Council E & E Meeting Held February 3, 2009



Priscilla Flowers, Adult Education Program Advisor, works with literacy council representatives.



Marie Bruno, Executive Director, Arkansas Literacy Councils, Inc., shares insight to achieving E & E.



Dr. Philip Less, Adult Education Program Advisor, leads session on NRS and E & E.



Representatives from literacy councils statewide participate in panel discussions and group activities targeting better performance.

## State Guidelines Mandate Effective & Efficient Use of Adult Education Funds

Meetings were held for literacy councils and adult education programs at the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center in Little Rock to update all adult education-funded programs on core outcome measures, also known as core indicators of performance. The Adult Education Division state staff is working with the literacy councils and adult education centers to ensure that all programs meet the federally negotiated benchmarks for these core indicators.

The National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) requires states to report students' academic progress and goal achievement, which includes entering employment, retaining or improving employment, obtaining a General Educational Development credential, and entering postsecondary education or training. Arkansas is required to evaluate programs annually based on the core indicators and may fund only programs that are considered effective and efficient (E & E), meeting 80% of the core indicators. E & E is determined by calculating the percent of the core indicators obtained by the students' actual progress and goal achievement in each program annually. Arkansas negotiates the annual percentages with the federal office using the continuous improvement model that requires at least 1% improvement over the previous year's actual progress.

The majority of Arkansas adult education programs and literacy councils meet E & E standards. A program that does not meet the prescribed benchmarks must go through a corrective action process: the program is visited by its state program advisor, the program designs a specific improvement plan to address its deficiencies, and the program is monitored monthly for progress towards meeting E & E.

### *Ouachita Technical College Student Success*

Linsey Moore earned her GED diploma in 2005 at Ouachita Technical College in Malvern. She wanted to graduate from traditional high school but missed a lot of days due to pregnancy.

Wanting a better life for her daughter led her to the Adult Education Center. Linsey says she was "surprised" at her own success. But that success was the springboard to enrolling in college. She currently works as a paraprofessional for the Adult Education program and assists others as they begin their journey toward earning an *Arkansas High School Diploma*.

Linsey says "earning a GED diploma has given me confidence" and is a great tool for better opportunities and further education.

