

Inmate Tutoring Program, AK

THE CHALLENGE

In 2016, Arkansas Literacy Councils (ALC) joined with the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) to address the problem of low/no literacy in the prison system. ProLiteracy states that 3 out of 4 inmates are low literate or did not complete high school. With prison schools at capacity, many students cannot read well enough to pass the GED® exam. If a person cannot read well enough to apply for a job or housing, recidivism is common. This program prepares students to study for the GED® exam.

THE SOLUTION

ALC and ADC built a program for seventeen units. The units have schools in place, but the classes are full. To serve the students most in need, ALC and ADC decided to place a one-on-one tutoring program under the compassionate eyes of the Chaplaincy, who would choose as tutors literate inmates with the patience and compassion necessary to escort the students into success. When the students complete the literacy program, they will be reading at a fifth grade level, better equipped to be successful as they strive to pass the GED® tests. ALC visits the units twice a year for a two-day, interactive training for the tutors in the Laubach methods. The tutors sign a contract for at least 6 months of tutoring. The program allows for transfers.

THE OUTCOME

After two rounds of training, there are 56 committed tutors working with 79 students. 28 tutors have completed both the training and six-month commitment and have received a certificate to be added to their parole file. They are all still continuing to tutor. The feedback from the inmates is heartening, and it is also making a difference in the tutors' outlook on life. Some paroled inmates are seeking to continue their learning in their communities, wanting to study for their GED® exam.

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