



Ouachita-Calhoun Literacy Council

Making a Difference in Arkansas

The mission statement of the Ouachita-Calhoun County Literacy Council is clear: “To assist adults in each community become economically self-sufficient, employable, and able to continue on to higher levels of education.”

The council provides free tutoring in a one-on-one or small group environment to Arkansas adults in the Ouachita, Calhoun and Dallas counties with low literacy skills. Their focus on reading, writing, math, and English skills helps their students to “improve the quality of their life, enter into the workforce, and/or improve their ability to participate in the community.”

Linda Nelson, the Executive Director for the council, explains that the council is partnered with Southern Arkansas University Tech’s Adult Education program and works with students who are seeking their GED. Most of the council’s students function at or below a 6th grade level, and the volunteer tutors are specially trained in adult basic literacy instruction.

When new students enter the program, they are first tested using the Wonderlic General Assessment of Instructional Needs (GAIN)® basic skills test. This test measures basic English and math skills and provides teachers with a detailed report including EFLs, scale scores and instructional suggestions. As students move through their education, they are progress tested and those results are shown graphically alongside the pretest results, allowing students and teachers to clearly see the progress each student has made.

“The students and teachers love the GAIN report,” says Linda. “It’s very motivating for students to see visually where they were and where they are now, and what they

need to do in terms of review and study to continue to advance.”

The council switched to the GAIN test after realizing it would fit their needs better. Linda states, “GAIN assesses all levels of readers and has an online system we can use to follow the student’s progress. No more spreadsheets!”

Their prior assessment was “a hassle.” It caused frustration for both students and teachers since it was so time-consuming. After switching to GAIN, Linda reports that “the time savings is substantial!”

Another frustration they were experiencing was that learning gains were not accurately measured and they had to manually track scores in a database. Now, the council is using Wonderlic Online for template scoring and recordkeeping.

“We can now store information from every student we work with; we have a record,” Linda explains. “Tracking is simple and we can compare their scores as they go through our program. [We can show the difference we’ve made in their lives!](#)”

Making a difference is important to Linda. She hopes to see the students move through the levels faster now that they know exactly what areas to focus on for each student. The faster they move up, the quicker they can achieve their goals, resulting in better lives for the students and their families.

“We can show
**the difference
we’ve made in
their lives!**”

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