



The mission of Arkansas Literacy Councils, Inc., is to "**Empower Arkansas Through Literacy**"

Purpose: Arkansas Literacy Councils, Inc. (ALC) is the state organization that works to support 45 literacy councils that recruit and train volunteer tutors to help **adults** improve their basic reading, writing, and math skills. All services are free.

Definition of Literacy: The National Literacy Act (Public Law 102-73, July 25, 1991) defines literacy as an individual's ability to read, write, and speak English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential.

Statistics: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009:

- * Over 13,600 adult students were tutored from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009 – 9,400 in Basic Literacy and 4,200 in English as a Second Language (ESL).
- * Basic Literacy students made 6,960 achievements and met 5,551 learning goals. ESL students made 4,227 achievements and met 5,403 learning goals.
- * Over 5,500 Arkansans served as volunteer tutors.
- * These tutors provided 104,896 hours of instruction; a value of \$2,124,144 (according to Independent Sector, a national nonprofit association which calculates the value of a volunteer hour at \$20.25.)
- * Volunteers donated an additional 32,961 hours on pre- and post-lesson preparation - worth \$667,460.
- * Other volunteers (3,402) supported literacy councils by serving as board members, helping with special projects, etc. They donated 59,736 hours – worth \$1,209,654.

Literacy Councils are contributing over \$4,000,000 in services to Arkansas' educational and economical development.

How many adults "can't read?" This is a common question with no clear answers because of the extent to which adults consider themselves literate. Many think they're doing well until something happens that forces them to make a major job or other life change – and they then realize their skills are inadequate. Others have a learning disability that has kept them from acquiring the skills they need. Very few adults are total non-readers, but the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy estimates that 1 of 7 Americans age 18 and over do not have the literacy skills they need.

According to the 2000 United States Census, Arkansas has over 1,700,000 residents over age 25. Of this number, 491,000, or almost 25 percent, do not have a high school diploma. Of the 491,000 Arkansans, 162,464 have less than an eighth-grade education. If a person does not have a high school diploma, it doesn't mean they do not have literacy skills. But, countless statistics show that if a person doesn't have a diploma, their ability to earn good salaries and get job promotions is greatly impacted.

How can I be a volunteer tutor? Call the ALC office to locate a literacy council near you. All volunteers, regardless of their educational background – or career – must take a tutor training workshop offered by the council. These workshops vary in length depending on the council. You will then be placed with a student. Tutors are asked to devote at least one hour a week to their students. The meeting times and places can vary, but is not allowed in individual homes. The literacy council will provide ongoing support to tutors as they work with students.

I want to help a literacy council, but tutoring is not for me. That's ok. Many literacy councils need volunteers for other duties, such as fundraisers or help with office work. You may also want to consider being a member of your council's board of directors.

What about English as a Second Language (ESL) tutoring? Do I need to know the student's native language to help? Many literacy councils are working to meet the needs of a fast-growing immigration population where many want to learn English. If your council is offering ESL services, and you would like to help someone learn English, you will need to take an ESL tutor training workshop. You do not need to know the student's native language to be an ESL tutor. The curriculum is based on English with instruction beginning as basic as learning the alphabet.

I know someone who needs help. Where do they go? Please call ALC between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number in Little Rock is 907-2490. The phone number outside Little Rock is 800-264-7323 – a free call. We will make a referral to the literacy council closest to the prospective student. A staff person will call the prospective student for a time to meet. At that meeting, students are asked about their goals and their education experiences. They will also be assessed to see what materials and instruction are needed to help them achieve their literacy goals.

It's not a shame when people don't have the literacy skills they need.

It's a shame they're not doing anything about it.

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Arkansas Business Publishing Group Nonprofit Organization of the Year – 2005