

Garden and Learn

*A partnership between Gaston Literacy Council and
The Rotary Club of Gastonia*



In laying out the garden, students used their math abilities to calculate volume, perimeter, and area.

Thirty-five adult learners elected to participate in our Garden and Learn project piloted in 2014/2015. Garden and Learn is project-based learning that combines hands-on learning with contextualized classroom instruction where students acquire a complex group of reading, math, listening, analytical, and decision-making skills. Students learned to read for information, fill out forms, summarize, compare and contrast, and they developed team building and problem solving habits while growing and harvesting in the Rotary Community Garden.



During harvest, students learned about safe food handling, preparation and storage, as well as the nutritional benefits of organically grown fruits and vegetables. Since they were able to take the food home to prepare for their families, they learned to follow recipe directions. Not all were familiar with standard measures and abbreviations, such as Tablespoon (tbs), Teaspoon (tsp), or Cup (C). Cooking terms such as beat, whip, and fold needed to be explained.



Throughout, the understanding of new words learned was easily assessed.

A record-breaking 82% of the participants post-tested advanced an NRS literacy level.

DEFINITION: Literacy is the ability to clearly read, write, and speak English on a level necessary to develop one's knowledge and potential, compute and solve problems, achieve individual goals, and function in our English-speaking society.

MISSION STATEMENT: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc., a private non-profit organization, exists to help people become functionally literate through advocacy initiatives and instructional services.

VISION: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. serves to promote a thriving, productive community that recognizes individuals in need of literacy services, encourages them to come forward, and supports their efforts to gain essential knowledge.

VALUE STATEMENT: The Gaston Literacy Council, Inc. believes that literacy enriches the quality of life for individuals and our community. To this end, we are committed to:

Partnership, Responsibility, Accountability, Inclusiveness, Accessibility, Learner-Centered Instruction, Volunteerism.

Adopted by the Board of Directors on August 26, 2003



ProLiteracy has announced a new program management resource for its members. It is based off of the Program Management Standards from the Accreditation system, and it includes resources to help programs meet the different standards.

Field examples of exemplary procedures from accredited programs make up the resource kit. We received notice that the following Gaston Literacy Council documents and processes were included: Board Member Position Descriptions, Volunteer Orientation, Strategic Planning Focus Group Survey, Strategic Plan Document, and Strategic Plan Summary Report.

ProLiteracy is the national association that acknowledges literacy organizations that are distinguished by *superior professional leadership, effective programs, committed governing boards, and outstanding volunteer support.*

Instructional Certifications

Knowing that the quality of instruction has the greatest impact on the performance of Basic Skills students, national organizations and federal and state agencies are requiring higher standards for instructors.

In the summer of 2014, the North Carolina Community College System Office began offering Basic Skills instructors from all program areas the opportunity to participate in a skill development ladder with stackable courses which lead to the official CEU-bearing *North Carolina Basic Skills Core Instructional Certificate and the Adult Ed Specialty Certificate: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.*

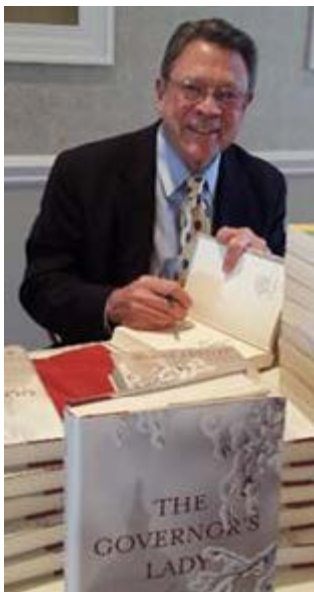
The coursework trains participants in research and evidence-based methodologies as well as learning philosophies, and the frameworks which support them. Courses and certifications are provided at no cost to programs funded by the System. Completers earn CEUs through NC State University. We are very proud of our Instructional Staff, Kelly Link, Christen Robinson and Donna Watson who have been engaged in this process from the beginning and who have earned both credentials.

Festival of Foods

As an ESL class project, students translated recipes from their native language into English. By doing this, students enhanced



their vocabulary to include culinary and commonly used kitchen terminology. Students were surprised to find that this component of their English was lacking. One student expressed that she had never used English in her kitchen because she is always around her family while cooking. Advanced English learners collaborated with beginning learners to complete online research, metric conversions and translations. The final classroom project combined the printed recipes with a picture of each student's dish and a story of why that dish is special to them. As an added bonus, each student brought their favorite dish to a "Festival of Foods" to share their recipes and stories with one another. Eighteen different countries were represented in this project.



Meet the Author

The annual Meet the Author event held on May 6, 2015 at the Gaston Country Club featured novelist, playwright and screenwriter Robert Inman. Inman is the author of five novels: *The Governor's Lady* (2013), *Home Fires Burning* (1987), *Old Dogs and Children* (1991), *Dairy Queen Days* (1997), and *Captain Saturday* (2002). He is also the author of *Coming Home: Life, Love and All Things Southern* (2000) and *The Christmas Bus* (2009). He has written screenplays for six motion pictures for television, two of which have been "Hallmark Hall of Fame" presentations. His script for *The Summer of Bell Tyler*, a Hallmark production, won the Writers' Guild of America Award as the best original television screenplay of 1997. His other Hallmark feature was *Home Fires* a 1989 adaptation of his novel. He is also the author of eight stage plays, the most recent of which is *Liberty Mountain*, a drama about the Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain, which premiered October 2014 in Kings Mountain, NC. His other plays, including two musicals, are *Crossroads*, *The Christmas Bus*, *Dairy Queen Days*, *Welcome to Milj'ord*, *A High Country Christmas*, *The Christmas Bus: The Musical*, and *The Drama Club*. Inman's plays are published by Dramatic Publishing Company.

Proceeds from the annual Meet the Author event support general programming.

Program Services

All services are Free and Confidential



Gaston Literacy Council (GLC) offers research-based courses in various levels of Reading, Writing, Math, English as Second Language, KeyTrain and Citizenship. Most classes are held at the 7,500 square foot GLC facility located in downtown Gastonia, which is handicap accessible and houses staff offices, a small lending library, classrooms, and one-on-one tutoring carrels. Technology is used daily in all program areas to enhance core curriculum instruction. All classes include instruction in how to research, assimilate and analyze all types

of information germane to everyday life.

All subject areas are enhanced by resources available on the Internet. Students use online resources such as BrainPOP, which provides animated activity pages and quizzes in Science, Health, Technology, Math, Social Studies, and English as a Second Language. We also make great use of the Kahn Academy, a free virtual learning environment that offers an extensive video library, interactive challenges, and assessments that cover K-12 math and science topics including biology, chemistry, and physics.

Financial Literacy classes use internet sites such as Money Smart, a program sponsored by the FDIC that has eleven modules that range from an introduction to banking, to financial recovery and home ownership. Students are presented with real-life scenarios, and they use fake money to act out those scenarios with the instructor as the banker.

Classes incorporate workplace language from jobs commonly found in Gaston County. KeyTrain's Career Ready 101 is used to explore careers identified and their skill requirements. Instructors help students determine if the career is a good fit for them and their families and whether the requisite training is available locally. Students learn to conduct research online to learn about education requirements and potential salary ranges for specific jobs.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

ABE Includes Basic Skills, High School Equivalency Test Preparation, and English as a Second Language.

The objectives are:

- To help beginning ABE students improve their reading, numeracy and technology skills. Beginning level learners study Reading Basics, Reading Comprehension, Math Concepts, and Spelling and Writing.
- To help students at the higher ABE and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) levels improve their literacy skills while preparing for the high school equivalency exam. They study Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math. *Since the establishment of this program in 2005, GLC has helped 111 clients pass the exam – 6% earned honors certificates.*
- To help English as Second Language (ESL) students improve their English communication skills while imparting basic survival information and expanding their understanding of our community and the United States. These students study Conversational English, Grammar, Writing, Spelling/Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension.

English Language/Civics (EL/Civics)



Since 2003, The NC Department of Community Colleges has provided grants to Gaston Literacy to develop educational strategies that teach English language skills using contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, and civic participation. The goal is to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members. EL/Civics students learn about the history and structure of the U.S. government, the geographical history and current geopolitical structure of the country, the roles and responsibilities of the president and the White House, and how to navigate the U.S. legal, educational, workplace, banking and healthcare systems.

Students with the goal of becoming US Citizens who have established permanent residency may attend Citizenship Classes to prepare for the Citizenship exam. In class, they practice reading and writing and learn about the Naturalization process. In addition to the Citizenship class, these candidates must attend ESL and Civics classes. One-on-one simulated interviews are conducted with students whose application is in process and for those whose interview is imminent.

Citizenship classes make use of many free internet resources including the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website. The following topics are covered: The Naturalization Process, American History, American Government, Integrated Civics, Colonial period and Independence, the 1800s, Recent American History, American Indians/Native Americans, Principles of American Democracy, Systems of Government, and Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship. **Since GLC began offering Citizenship preparation in 2008, 53 or 100% of the clients referred for the exam have passed.**

KeyTrain is the computer-based curriculum that prepares students for the National WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). It equips learners with 21st century workplace skills, reinforces GED® aptitudes in Reading for Information, Locating Information, and Applied Math, accelerates ESL advancement, and helps clients explore career opportunities and pathways. This program has contributed to our students' success in obtaining the GED®. **Since we began combining this instruction with GED preparation in 2010, 88 clients have earned their GED®; 62 have earned the CRC; 154 have either become employed or retained their job; and 6 have entered post-secondary education.**



ADULT STUDENT OUTCOMES

The 2014/2015 outcomes for core curriculum programs are detailed below. (Adult client improvement outcomes are based on formal pre-/post-testing utilizing the federally-recognized CASAS and/or TABE adult assessment systems. Eligibility for post-testing is based on the test developers' prescribed number of instructional hours.)

210 unduplicated adult students were served in the following Adult Basic Education Programs:

Adult Basic Skills	20	GED Prep	18	English as Second Language	172
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In addition to the required core curriculum classes, students elected to attend the following complementary classes:

KeyTrain	36	Transitions to College/Careers	44	Contextualized Family	46
Connected Classroom	186	Community Garden	35	Citizenship	43

Outcomes (National Reporting System literacy level advancement as measured by CASAS and/or TABE)

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Listening</u>
Post-Tested	70	18	54
Demonstrated Improvement	61%	78%	83%
Advanced National Literacy Level	39%	56%	61%
Earned CRC	8	Got a Job	26
Earned Citizenship	6	Other Personal Goals	85
		Retained Employment	52

READING SOUL MATES

Reading Soul Mates matches at-risk second-grade students with supportive role models who tutor, set expectations, and provide motivation and guidance. Using the Gaston County Schools-approved curriculum Scholastic Guided Reading, children develop a positive attitude toward reading, achieve success, and build self-confidence. The program includes a variety of language skill building activities and incorporates a multi-style approach to teaching. Students learn to focus on meaning and use problem-solving strategies to figure out words, deal with difficult sentence structure, and understand new concepts. Discussions and open-ended questions help children develop higher order thinking skills by inspiring imagination. The Accelerated Reader (AR) approved curriculum is also used in tutoring sessions. The computer-based AR testing provides immediate and more frequent feedback on students' reading and comprehension skills improvement, helps them gain computer skills, and helps both the students and schools achieve their annual AR goals.



Special thanks to volunteers Lil Summerville, Mark Ludwig, Elizabeth Lowery, and Tracy Small who tutored 9 second-graders at Robinson Elementary. 100% improved. Two achieved grade level reading and one exceeded. Those who did not achieve grade level are just slightly below and continued their studies during the summer at Gaston County Schools' Reading Camp.

For the second year in a row, Gaston Literacy Council received leadership grants from the NC Community College system to develop contextualized curriculum and innovative procedures **that focus on the preparation of students for further education and the world of work.**

Innovations in Transitions

The objectives of the innovations project were to: 1) improve literacy skills through the integration of college and career exploration and pathways development into the core curriculum classes, 2) increase the number of CRCs earned, and 3) increase the rate at which students transition into post-secondary education and/or the workforce.



44 students were served in the core classes and many elected to attend the following additional classes:

Key Train 25 Connected Classroom 42 Community Garden 3

Outcomes (National Reporting System literacy level advancement as measured by CASAS and/or TABE)

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Listening</u>
Post-Tested	18	15	8
Demonstrated Improvement	67%	87%	63%
Advanced National Literacy Level	33%	60%	50%
Earned CRC 7			
Achieved Employment Goals 23			

Contextualized Instruction in Family Literacy

This project was designed to: 1) help parents improve their own reading, math, and technology skills while learning how to foster early literacy skills in their children, 2) include training in how to be the primary teachers for their children and more involved partners in their education, 3) strengthen the transition into career pathways and/or postsecondary education, and 4) integrate occupational exploration and career planning.



46 students were served in the core classes and many elected to attend the following complementary classes and/or career exploration activities:

KeyTrain 3 Connected Classroom 46 Community Garden 17

Outcomes (National Reporting System literacy level advancement as measured by CASAS and/or TABE)

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Listening</u>
Post-Tested	31	2	28
Demonstrated Improvement	65%	50%	89%
Advanced National Literacy Level	45%	50%	71%
Earned CRCs 1			
Achieved Employment Goals 26			

Thank You

Contributors

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United Way of Gaston County

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Audited Financial Statement

July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

Beginning Balance	\$148,866
Receipts	433,380
Subtotal	582,246
Disbursements	\$426,868
Ending Balance	\$155,378
Liabilities.....	0

Endowment

Beginning Balance – Fair Market Value	\$843,028
Deposit – Contributions.....	1,000
Withdrawals	32,657
Net Earnings.....	26,578
Ending Balance – Fair Market Value.....	\$837,949

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