Literacy is a Root Cause of Unemployment, Poverty and Incarceration

Studies have substantiated since the late 1960s that “literacy” is a documented root cause of unemployment, poverty and incarceration in Illinois. The last thing OBK wants to do is set up our clients to fail (help them get a job and then lose it because they cannot read adequately).

The Staggering Numbers:

- 80% of inmates who leave prisons without learning how to read will return to prison.
- The IDOC has a current inmate population of some 40,000. Some 28,000 (70%) are reading impaired.
- The IDOC Staff Educators help 53% if inmates advance reading skills.
- Only 12% of inmates who learn to read while in prison do repeat offend.
- OBK can help 97% of our reading impaired clients learn to read. This advancement significantly increases the likelihood our reading impaired clients will become gainfully employed, avoid poverty, and avoid recidivism.

OBK Literacy Plan and Goals:

1) Upon Intake, OBK Staff **SORT Literacy test ALL** OBK clients to ascertain if Literacy advancement is a need of our clients.
2) It is imperative that clients can read at a 5th Grade level or above. Testing takes 5-10 minutes, and if needed, a lesson instructor is found and appointment is scheduled.
3) We encourage client or general public volunteers to assist tutoring clients needing help.
4) Depending upon how many classes a client student has per week, on average we can increase a client student’s reading skills one grade per month if they have 2 classes per week.
5) Learning to read adequately is life-changing in itself for clients. (They had no idea what they were missing in life, and why they were failing...and they go forth with exceptional optimism).