

Mason-Lake Adult Ed: Never Going Back



Since July 1, 2012, students can no longer enroll in college courses without a GED or high school diploma. Combine this with the escalated skills requirements of the job market, and we have a very big problem for high school dropouts. Without a GED or high school diploma, these students will struggle to find employment, be locked out of the middle class, and face significantly lower incomes than their more educated counterparts.

This is where Mason-Lake Adult Education comes in.

Mason-Lake Adult Education, with locations in Baldwin and Scottville, Michigan, is a part of the Mason County Central school district. They offer four free programs—High School Diploma, GED Prep, Adult Basic Education, and Transitions to College.



Full 2012 graduating class.

Mason-Lake had been using the same assessment to test students for 33 years. The program switched to GAIN, and, after just one year of use, Director Liz Stark knows they will never go back.

“We are a very small program with a limited budget. We don’t advertise and pretty much rely on word of mouth,” Stark says. “Having GAIN on our side has helped our program tremendously. Students are moving through their EFLs quicker and more students are graduating than ever before!”

In Michigan, state law dictates that students cannot even begin GED prep or high school courses unless they are at a ninth grade reading level. If a student is below a ninth grade reading level, they are entered into ABE courses. While this ensures that students are receiving thorough instruction and training, it prolongs their goal of obtaining a GED or high school diploma. Knowing the reason that they are in remediation helps the students more easily accept the need for a tune-up while motivating them to work and retest sooner, rather than giving up again.



Lake County campus graduates.

Helping these students reach their goals quickly is key to ensuring they complete their program. GAIN helps them pinpoint their weaknesses, tells them what they need to do to fix it, and gets them to where they need to be—fast.

Prior to using GAIN, it would take more than 24 hours to get test results back. Based on the results, the instructors had to make guesses on where the student stood. If they were wrong, the student had to be retested.



Superintendent Jeff Mount of Mason County Central Schools and graduate.

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“There is a **direct correlation** between GAIN and our higher retention and graduation rates.”

No more waiting and no more guessing.

“It comes down to students seeing their results right away. You can’t run away from a report that says your skills are rusty. GAIN gave us an immediate response which allowed us to be able to get them into the books they needed and get started right away.”

Even more remarkable, in the year since they have been using GAIN, students have been more successful than ever before. In fact, **more people have stayed in the program and gotten their GED than in the last 9 years.**

“We’ve had people jump two grade levels 42 times,” Stark reports. “We’ve never had scores like that!”

GAIN not only helps students move through their EFLs and get to their goals faster, it also significantly improved retention.



Superintendent Stiles Simmons of Baldwin Community Schools and graduate.

Lisa Satler, a teacher at Mason-Lake, has doubled her graduation rate since she began using the GAIN report to drive instruction.

“GAIN helps identify right away where they need work. We know their level and skills gaps right away,” Satler says. “The students like the GAIN workbooks. It makes sense to them. It’s exciting for them when they can take their next test and see what they’ve improved on.”

The results have been “jaw dropping.” Stark is thrilled with what she’s seeing.

“We were in awe when we started looking at our numbers. We could sense a difference but now we are seeing it in the numbers. **There is a direct correlation between GAIN and our higher retention and graduation rates.**”

Getting their students to graduation is essential to ensuring they succeed later in life. With GAIN on their side, Stark is confident they will continue to help their students achieve their goals.