

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

A long-time partnership between the ESC and the Pickaway County Intensive Supervision program has a new teacher.



"It gives me a sense of structure to be able to say there's something in the future I'm working toward."

Brent has fewer than a half-dozen students and Robert said the individualized instruction is very helpful.

Brent Neal has been teaching the program since January, following the retirement of long-time teacher Nancy Moshtaghi.

The program, which meets in the basement of Circleville Municipal Court, provides GED classes to misdemeanor and felony offenders. In Fiscal Year 2015, 21 of 60 offenders lacked a high school diploma.

"I do it because I think learning is important," said Brent, a former journalist.

Students in the program can meet for up to four hours a week to study English, math, science and social studies.

On a recent Tuesday, Brent and student Robert Schofield, 51, reviewed the Revolutionary War.

Robert has been attending classes for about three months because he's wanted to get his GED for years.

Brent Neal, right, has been teaching the GED program at the Circleville Municipal Court since January.

"Brent is really good at showing me how to learn things," Robert said.

The program, started in 1996, originally was intended to provide more services to offenders with the goal of reducing recidivism and incarceration rates.

But in 2006 the focus changed to helping offenders develop new skills and behaviors, said Chief Probation Officer Jason McGowan, who oversees the program.

Jason said probation officers are seeing more improvement in students with the new focus.

Students who excel can receive incentives to pay for the GED test through a grant, Jason said.



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For Robert, who lost a 23-year job in Columbus following a brush with the law, getting a job is very important to him.

"It's been a struggle to get a job," Robert said, referencing his lack of a diploma. "And going to class helps me take my mind off my troubles by being able to focus on school."

Brent said Robert is a model student. Because the class counts toward community service hours, some students only go as long as they have to. But Robert attends every Tuesday and Thursday.

"Robert doesn't have to be here," said Brent. "He chooses to be here."

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