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Miami Public Library Offers Free High School Completion Program

Residents of Miami and surrounding communities have another option available to complete their high school education thanks to a pilot project of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) and the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD).

Miami Public Library and four other public libraries in the state are offering a limited number of scholarships for qualifying individuals to access Gale Excel High School, an online and fully-accredited High School Diploma program recognized by colleges, universities, and employers. Residents **25-years-old and older** are eligible for the scholarships.

Funding for the pilot is courtesy of funds from the U.S. Department of Labor under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds through the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

“This is a great opportunity for individuals who have schedules that make it difficult to participate in other adult education programs,” according to Marcia Johnson, director of the library.

“The high school completion program is self-paced, so students will find it easier to balance school with the demands of their daily life,” Johnson said. “There’s also a great variety of classes offered, and teachers and instructors are behind the scenes for students who have questions or need additional assistance.”

ODL Director Melody Kellogg said the flexibility of the program—as well as its online access—is important, especially in the age of COVID.

“We wanted to use some of our ARPA funds to expand the educational offerings of our public libraries, and we knew that the pandemic had disrupted so many schedules across the board. Attending a crowded classroom in-person may not be an option for some people. Excel High School allows for social distancing while providing top-notch educational opportunities,” Kellogg said.

Kellogg said online high school programs in public libraries also have a proven track record in Oklahoma. The Pioneer Library System that serves Cleveland, McLain and Pottawatomie counties is currently offering the program.

Pioneer Director Lisa Wells said the library system has celebrated eight graduations and that eleven students are presently enrolled.

“Many of our graduates have shared that they’ve been able to receive promotions, higher pay, and even apply for college,” Wells said. “The feedback we receive from the students shows the transformative power of a high school diploma.”

Wells said getting to graduation isn’t easy for some students since they may be balancing full-time jobs and families. “But we’ve witnessed first-hand the positive impact achieving this goal has on the student, their families, and their earning potential.”

Kellogg said improving success on the work front for students is a program goal for ODL.

“A high school education is essential for today’s job seekers, and we knew we wanted to work with the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development on this project,” Kellogg said. “They came on board with major funding and we’re so grateful.”

“The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development is thrilled to support the Department of Libraries and the pilot libraries,” OOWD Deputy Director Susannah Gravley, said. “Expanding access to adult education, and increasing the number of Oklahomans with a high school diploma, is critical for the future of our workforce and will open doors for individuals across the state.”

Wells said it’s exciting to see Excel High School expanding to other public libraries in the state, and she encourages potential students in Miami to explore the option.

“The evaluations and testimonies of our graduates show the program can make such a difference,” Wells said.

For more information on Excel High School, visit or call Miami Public Library at 918-541-2292.

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The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) is the official state library of Oklahoma. It serves the information and records management needs of state government, assists with public library development, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through its specialized collections. ODL manages the state’s federal library funds granted through the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD) houses Oklahoma Works, the State’s workforce development initiative, and administers the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I-financially assisted programs/activities under the U.S. Department of Labor.