

# **Research Topic in Basic Education (ABE): Effectively Serving American-Born Learners**

## **Importance of this Research**

Literacy Action Network (LAN) conducted Focus Groups with ABE professionals statewide. There is a critical need for research in ABE. The Professional Issues Committee has identified a number of research topics to be pursued by university students. Additional topics are available at the LAN website:

<http://www.literacyactionnetwork.org/>

You are encouraged to use the LAN Professional Issues Committee as a resource and share results to help improve the ABE field. Potential formats for sharing results include posting links to research on the LAN website, attending a Professional Issues Committee meeting or presenting at the annual ABE Summer Institute conference.

## **Research Topic:**

How can Adult Basic Education (or ABE) programs more effectively serve American-born learners?

## **Sample research questions:**

- What instructional methods work best for American-born learners?
- Compare two ABE programs that serve American-born learners, noting retention rates and NRS level completion rates.
- What are some program models that effectively serve American-born learners? (Is it one-on-one tutoring, group classes, computer-based learning, a combination of these types or another instructional model?)
- What keeps American-born learners motivated in learning?
- What happens to American-born learners after they leave an ABE program, in terms of learning and work?
- A study comparing what skills American-born learners report needing and what skills instructors identify their learners needing.
- How to appropriately set and follow up on goals set with American-born learners in the ABE classroom.
- What do American-born learners want the ABE staff to know? (This could be an analysis of several interviews and/or focus groups with ABE learners.)
- What type of learning environment do American-born ABE learners want?
- What brings an American-born learner to an ABE program?
- What program practices retain American-born learners?
- What “other skills” do American-born learners need and how do instructors effectively teach these skills? These could include critical thinking, planning, study skills, time management, test-taking and other “soft skills.”
- What support services are necessary to retain American-born learners in ABE classes?

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## **Background:**

### *Defining the Issue*

Many ABE programs throughout the state are challenged in serving American-born learners. They report that these learners attend class inconsistently, frequently drop out, and often have learning difficulties. Programs wonder how they could better serve these learners.

### *Defining the Terms*

ABE = Adult Basic Education; a state and federally funded program through the Department of Education to serve adults wanting to earn their GED, learn English, gain basic literacy skills, and prepare for the world of work or post-secondary education. ABE programs can be found throughout Minnesota in schools, correctional facilities and nonprofit organizations.

American-Born Learners = They are adults who are born in the United States yet need basic literacy instruction. Many have dropped out of school and had difficult formal learning experiences. This population is also more likely to live in poverty, be unemployed or under-employed, and may have learning disabilities.

NRS = National Reporting System; the federal process that defines educational functioning levels and acceptable measures and tools to measure learner levels.

### *Target Learner Population*

The studies would target ABE learners who were born in the United States and attending Basic Skills, GED, Transitions to Work, or any other ABE class.

## **Resources/ contacts:**

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Adult Basic Education Web Site  
<http://mnabe.themlc.org>

Literacy Action Network Web Site  
<http://www.literacyactionnetwork.org/>