MINNESOTA
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
REPORT

Educational Programming and Services for Minnesota’s Future
ABE Services are Critical for Minnesota
Adult Basic Education Provides Programming for Minnesota’s Future

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a flexible and adaptive system that is continually evolving to address the rapidly changing environment for skilled labor, economic improvement and literacy. The statewide program provides education and literacy programs throughout Minnesota for adults without a high school diploma or who are no longer eligible for high school to participate effectively as productive workers and as citizens. Education and workforce training programs through ABE provide skills development opportunities for improving the economic future of individuals and their families. A foundation to navigate life including parenting instruction, critical thinking and becoming a constructive member of the community are additional components of ABE.

ABE Impact for Minnesota
ABE serves Minnesota with 44 ABE Consortia with multiple sites located in public schools, workforce centers, community/technical colleges, businesses, prisons/jails, libraries, learning centers, tribal centers and nonprofit organizations. Services provided include:
- GED® and Adult Diploma Classes
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- College and Postsecondary Preparation
- Occupational and Workforce Preparation
- Family Literacy
- Citizenship/Civics Education
- Basic Skills Enhancement
- Digital Literacy
- Distance Learning

Who Does ABE Serve?
Approximately 70,000 Minnesota adults too old for K-12, whose literacy skills are too low for traditional college and those who may not speak English.
- 36% who are adults with English as a Second Language
- 19% who are adults without a high school diploma
- 11% who receive public assistance
- 10% who are formerly incarcerated

ABE is Accountable to Minnesota
Minnesota ABE has hit all standardized testing targets for state and federal governments and meets other outcomes such as targets for adults obtaining employment, entering post secondary education or leaving public assistance.

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Minnesota’s Labor Crisis

Minnesota is approaching a workforce crisis in the near future due to a lack of educated and skilled labor available. Minnesota’s adult workforce will not be able to accommodate the skills and education needed to fill the available jobs in Minnesota. ABE is a necessary and imperative system for the education and training crucial to close the skills gap in the state.

Solution 1: Adaptability

Minnesota ABE transitions low skill adults into higher education and training utilizing programming introducing higher education, training and career pathways. ABE programming recognizes and adapts to the changing demand in higher-level and trade-specific skills needed to support newly created occupations and job shifts. Under the federal WIOA Act, Minnesota ABE partners with workforce centers, vocational rehabilitation and other programs for increased fluidity and training. Distance and hybrid instruction provide options for time-pressed adult students where academic success and training can be a challenge due to lack of basic skills as well as balancing work and family. The intensified learning opportunities with these programs are a huge benefit to students. Flexibility, support and guidance through ABE can help adult learners succeed.

Solution 2: Innovation

A key partner in innovative programming to reach those who need support through community colleges and workforce centers, Minnesota ABE has implemented cutting edge initiatives such as FastTRAC (Fast Training, Resources, and Credentialing) and the Northstar Digital Literacy project. In fact, Minnesota ABE is regarded as a national leader in many areas including transition to postsecondary programming, distance learning and digital literacy, and adult numeracy instruction.

Solution 3: New Literacy

The definition of literacy has changed, broadening its scope beyond what literacy meant a few generations ago. Digital literacy and the ability to function in an automated and electronic-driven world requires a new skill set for many immigrant and adult learners. Online, healthcare literacy and critical thinking skills are necessary to make life choices based on reliable information.
Minnesota Provides Education to Adult Immigrants
Upskilling and Educating Foreign-born, American Residents.

Immigration to Minnesota
Minnesota has become a major immigration destination for our country’s newest Americans. In 2014, approximately 385,000 Minnesota residents were foreign-born. In addition, there are about 173,000 children born in the United States and living in Minnesota with at least one immigrant parent. Many of the immigrants to our state are refugees or asylees who have fled their home countries. This dramatic influx of immigrants has had far reaching effects on Minnesota with visible changes in almost every community across the state.

Minnesota Foreign-born Residents Population Growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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Geographic Location

- Of immigrants, 80% are concentrated in the Twin Cities Metro area.
- Of immigrants, 20% reside in smaller communities around the state.

Workforce Participation

Foreign-born residents tend to be concentrated at the high and low ends of the workforce spectrum. A majority are concentrated in low-skill employment such as meat packing, poultry processing and similar agriculture-related work.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

- An estimated 250,000 Minnesota residents need ESL services.

Reality for Minnesota

Educating and upskilling the foreign-born Minnesota population concentrated at the lower end of the workforce spectrum is a necessity for the state’s economic future. Immigrants will be important to the workforce needs of Minnesota in coming decades since they tend to be younger than non-immigrant Minnesotans and will help to fill positions as the state population ages and more highly-skilled workers are needed.

How do Minnesota ABE Programs Assist New Americans?

Minnesota ABE programs have extensive experience and expertise at being in the forefront of working with immigrant populations as they arrive in Minnesota. ABE programs continue to enable New Americans to increase their English proficiency and to obtain citizenship if they have not previously. ABE services also assist New Americans without a high school diploma to obtain high school equivalency, and most importantly, to prepare for postsecondary education or training toward higher-paid, in-demand career pathways.
Successful Programming for New Americans in Mankato

Minnesota ABE programs at the Lincoln Community Center have developed deep-rooted relationships within Mankato that assist New Americans in becoming successful members of their new community.

ABE programs at the Lincoln Community Center provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for immigrant/refugee adults at any English level as well as supporting classes like writing and mathematics. Furthermore, ABE supports these adults in working toward obtaining citizenship, preparing for the GED® test and preparation for career pathways training or college. For these immigrant/refugee adults from Somalia, Sudan, Mexico, Vietnam and other places, the Lincoln Center is so much more than a school.

The Lincoln Center staff actively partners with Pre-K, K-12 schools, community colleges, and the Mankato Area Refugee Consortium to ensure that immigrant/refugee needs are fully addressed and families are well-integrated into the community. The Lincoln Community Center also provides a preschool where children can stay while their parents attend ABE classes, providing both parents and kids an education at the same time while in the same building.

Immigrant Acclimation to Mankato

Minnesota ABE works within their own school district and with the Minnesota Council of Churches to provide home visits to all newly arrived immigrant/refugee families. Families are assisted with school enrollment and connected to important school district and social services resources. Parents learn how to navigate systems and to advocate for what they need.

ABE also convenes forums for K-12 administrators and ESL teachers in the Mankato district to ensure that immigrant/refugee issues are well understood and that parents are referred to ABE programming.

ABE Class Profile: E-Power

E-Power students and teachers speak regularly at community forums attended by Mankato-area social services personnel in order to assist providers in understanding challenges faced by immigrant/refugee families. In turn, E-Power teachers integrate real-life community skills into their ABE instruction such as understanding law enforcement, finding housing or advocating with landlords, health and safety issues, and much more.

Student Profile: Fatima

As a little girl in Somalia, Fatima dreamed of going to school and getting a good education. She quickly learned her dream would not come true since her family and tribe did not believe girls should receive an education. As the civil war began in Somalia, Fatima’s family arranged her marriage to protect and move her away from the country.

After many travails, including a harrowing sea voyage and time spent in a refugee camp, Fatima was able to come to the United States with her husband and young son.

Entering the Early Childhood program at the Lincoln Community Center has made all the difference for Fatima and her family. Fatima is gaining the education she never thought she would have and continues to improve her literacy skills. Through a combination of home visits, preschool classroom interventions, parenting skills, guidance and support, her son is making the transition to a new life in America from a very difficult life in the refugee camp. Fatima is so happy to see her son learning and preparing for kindergarten. According to her, “Coming to Lincoln School is the best thing that has happened in my life.”
Minnesota ABE Strives for Job Attainment
Providing Basic Skills Enhancement for Increased Earning Potential

Improving the employment and earnings prospects for Minnesota adults is a major focus of Adult Basic Education (ABE) programming. ABE programs develop the workforce skills of Minnesota’s low skill adults by:

- Providing basic skills enhancement at ABE sites, Workforce Centers, and community college campuses around the state, creating a foundation for further study and training.
- Partnering with local employers to provide Workforce Education programs onsite at the place of employment. In the context of work, foundational skills are taught and learned for basic literacy, numeracy and English as a Second Language (ESL).
- Partnering with the Northstar Digital Literacy project to bridge the digital divide for low skill adults in Minnesota.
- Serving as a leader in the area of career pathways programming by partnering with employers, community colleges, job training and social services providers to develop the literacy and job-specific skills of adults while bridging them into promising training and employment opportunities.

Cited in the international OECD study of adult skills around the world, “While other countries have been showing improvements in equipping their adult populations with the skills needed to be productive in their society, the United States has remained relatively unchanged in the decade since the last report, thus falling further behind their international counterparts.”

“More specifically, the large number of low skill adults in the U.S. “who have trouble reading, doing math, solving problems, and using technology will find the doors of the 21st century workforce closed to them.”

-Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2013

The average high school dropout in Minnesota earns approximately $7,000 less per year than the average high school or GED* graduate.

- Minnesota Business Partnership and the 2000 Census

The average cost to taxpayers for each high school dropout is $292,000 over their working life, including incarceration costs.

- Northwestern University Center for Labor Market Studies. (2009)

Minnesota Adults Needing ABE Services
There are approximately 3.3 million working age adults in Minnesota. Of these adults:

- 251,210 have not completed high school
- 892,744 have completed high school but not entered college (most require remedial reading or math)
- 832,371 have some college but have not completed a degree or credential (48% require remedial reading or math)
- 61,327 speak “little or no” English
- 346,968 earn less than a living wage (twice the federal poverty level)

- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). (2009)

Adults needing remediation before taking credit-bearing college classes often pay tuition and access financial aid and are often unaware that free ABE services exist.


Minnesota employers report large costs to train and retain employees whose lack of basic skills or ability to speak English are liabilities to productivity.

- Minnesota Business Partnership and the 2000 Census
Filling the Employment Pipeline in Northwest Minnesota

Northwest Minnesota serves as a prime example of an area where Minnesota adults can find employment if they have the requisite skills for positions in the healthcare and manufacturing fields. That is why ABE programs within the Northwest Service Cooperative work hard to ensure that adults in the region with low literacy or English skills make it to college or job training.

Covering nearly 11,000 square miles and 27 school districts, the Northwest Service Cooperative provides 20 classrooms around the area. It also co-locates ABE teachers on college campuses including Northwest Technical College and the Northland Community and Technical College at both Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks locations. ABE teachers work with adults to develop the reading, math and digital literacy skills crucial for college success.

Northwest Minnesota: Opportunities to Work in Healthcare
Evelyn Mosher grew up in the Philippines where her family was poor and her parents did not have the money to send her to college. She worked in a variety of low skill jobs including inspecting bottles for a beverage manufacturer. In 2009 she moved to Minnesota and discovered that there was a demand for skilled healthcare workers including phlebotomists, therapists, x-ray technicians and nurses. Since then Evelyn has learned English, earned her GED* diploma and became a United States citizen through participation in ABE classes. She is currently strengthening her reading vocabulary and computer skills at Northland Community and Technical College, where she made the President’s List, in order to become college-ready for the nursing program she plans to enroll in for better employment. According to Evelyn, “I could not have done what I’ve done without ABE.”

Northwest Minnesota: Opportunities to Work in Geospatial Intelligence
Noah Berg dropped out of high school. While he had some fun with friends and even spent time biking to Alaska, he also felt stuck and hopeless, “I worked a lot of unrewarding jobs, like dishwashing, barely making minimum wage.” A social worker referred him to ABE where he not only completed his GED diploma, but did so with several perfect scores. It was then that ABE staff asked, “What next?” and steered him toward one of their college partnership initiatives where he entered a program with many students twice his age that also had much more education. “I was very nervous that first day. I credit my GED teacher with talking me into it, giving me support, and ensuring that I didn’t drop out, which I almost did.”

Noah has completed an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Geospatial Intelligence Analysis at Northland Community and Technical College where he finished at the top of his class. He plans to enter a Bachelor’s of Science program in Geography next. The median wage in his intended career field is $40,000 - $60,000 with up to $150,000 possible. With determination, hard work and support from ABE, Noah is a great deal closer to providing a solid financial foundation for himself and his family. Not to mention doing something much more meaningful to him than washing dishes.

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Minnesota Embraces Technology for Instruction

ABE Offers Additional Opportunities with Distance Learning

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) is helping Minnesota prepare for the future by offering Distance Learning programming in response to the needs of adult students.

What is Distance Learning?
Distance Learning allows students the flexibility to learn off-site from a classroom or school while managing their education and training at their own pace. Distance Learning can be the sole mode of instruction or it can be offered in combination with classroom learning where students attend classes but engage in independent study as well. This allows for flexible learning and intensified achievement.

The Importance of Distance Learning.
Research shows that Distance Learning combined effectively with classroom instruction is the most successful approach for increasing adult student achievement because learning is amplified and reinforced.

How do ABE Programs Support Adults in Learning at a Distance?
The majority of ABE programs across Minnesota now offer a combination of Distance Learning and classroom instruction. Adult students have increased access to course curriculum providing the ability for faster learning based on their needs while also better preparing them for postsecondary and work.

As of 2014
38 out of 45 Minnesota consortia had students enrolled in Distance Learning.

Adult Student Level Gains on Standardized Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with more Distance Learning than classroom instruction, or no classroom learning at all</td>
<td>All enrolled students</td>
<td>Students who use Distance Learning to supplement their classroom instruction (the Minnesota ABE approach!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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Metro North ABE - Thanh Vy Nguyen

Thanh Vy arrived in the United States from Vietnam without a high school diploma and only limited English skills. She attended classes at the Metro North ABE site in Blaine where she passed all the ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, completed her GED® diploma and passed her Citizenship test with ABE assistance. For over six months, Thanh Vy has been enrolled in the Distance Learning program to fit her schedule for class time and her job. The extra time on the computer improved her understanding of English grammar and aided her in scoring higher on the Accuplacer test to gain admission to North Hennepin Community College. She hopes to do college-level work toward a degree in Medical Laboratory Technology. Distance Learning allowed her to work on her own time, at her own pace to go that extra mile toward her goal.

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Digital Literacy is Critical in ABE Programming

Digital Literacy for adult students is an essential skill for their success. Digital Literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share and create content using information technologies and the Internet. - The Digital Literacy Project. Cornell University, Digital Literacy Resource.

Why is Digital Literacy Important?
In today’s world, literacy is more than just the ability to read and write. The jobs of the future and the college preparation and training programs for those jobs will require the ability to understand and effectively use digital technologies as well as the Internet. Most low-literacy adults in Minnesota have limited digital literacy skills and access. They fall on “the other side” of the digital divide.

ABE is Bridging the Digital Divide in Minnesota
Minnesota ABE is a key partner in the Northstar Digital Literacy project. Minnesota ABE is adopting these digital literacy standards and online assessments as a baseline of requirements needed at the completion of ABE. This means that ABE teachers across Minnesota are integrating digital literacy skill-building into their instruction, and engaging in professional development for increased proficiency. Passing the Northstar assessments will meet the new Minnesota Adult High School Diploma digital literacy standards. Northstar is also being used as a collaborative service delivery tool by ABE programs and their local libraries statewide. For more information about the Northstar Digital Literacy project, visit: digitalliteracy.org.

ABE and Libraries: Partners for Digital Literacy
Between March and September 2014, the library and ABE programs in Duluth, Faribault, Moorhead, St. Cloud and Worthington with funding from a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant under the joint management of the Saint Paul Public Library and the Minnesota Literacy Council, collaborated in using the Northstar digital literacy tools. For the project, each ABE-library partnership established at least one sponsoring site in their community to provide residents with access to the Northstar certificate program. In addition, Northstar-aligned computer instructional programs were offered to their communities.

Worthington’s Northstar program illustrates digital literacy outcomes that may not have been possible without ABE-library partnerships. The program started with a small group of dedicated students that developed into close mentoring relationships among the instructors and students. The growth of this dynamic program is key to the long-term success of Northstar in a small community like Worthington.

Julie Wellnitz, Director of Nobles County Library (l.) and Marty Olsen, Program Manager of Worthington ABE, stand behind Omot Akony Akok, a learner in the Worthington Northstar program.
Minnesota ABE Reaches Adults in the Skills Gap
Providing a Stepping Stone in Learning

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs are vitally important because they serve as stepping stones for lower skilled adults to pursue education and training. Offering GED® or Adult Diploma, college and career pathways preparation classes opens up opportunities for adults in higher education, training/credentialing and the workforce. Preparation programming includes English language skills improvement for non-English speaking adults to move into additional education and training.

According to a 2009-2011 survey by the US Census Bureau* - Tapping the Potential report (US Department of Education)

356,032 MINNESOTA ADULTS are without a high school credential
83,869 MINNESOTA ADULTS do not speak English well or at all with 63% of these adults without a high school credential

According to the Governor’s Workforce Development Council, 70% of Minnesota jobs will require some postsecondary education by 2018. Currently there are not enough Minnesotans in the traditional education pipeline to meet the demand for education and skills. This means that retooling our current population of prospective working adults is crucial. - Governor’s Workforce Development Council

This represents a tremendous loss of human potential for Minnesota. These adults represent a key target population for ABE services.

Supporting Adults in Upskilling for Education and Employment
ABE provides stepping stones for adults in Minnesota to overcome the skills gap.

- Minnesota ABE programs assist adults who need a high school credential for entrance to higher education or employment.

- Minnesota ABE programs reduce costs for learners entering higher education by diminishing the need for fee-based remedial classes at state colleges and universities via brush up and college preparation instruction.

- Minnesota ABE has blazed the trail in building the Academic, Career & Employability (ACES) skills that adults need to be successful in higher education and the workforce.

- As a primary driver of FastTRAC (Training, Resources and Credentialing), Minnesota ABE is a key partner in efforts to develop a comprehensive workforce preparation system in Minnesota.
Danielle Kack came to FastTRAC from the Refuge Program, a service that provides shelter, after surviving an abusive relationship and months of homelessness. Though she had no transportation and a child to care for, she possessed determination to make some changes in her life and a passion for the healthcare profession. With many bumps in the road and almost quitting several times, FastTRAC resources made all the difference. The SW MN PIC program provided assistance while the Avera Company provided employment with flexible work hours to support Danielle in completing her training. Danielle’s Adult Basic Education instructor helped reduce intimidation with college level teachers and coursework, and her fellow participants became like a family to her. Currently a TMA, she plans to continue on to nursing school. According to Danielle, “The FastTRAC program has driven me to go further. I can’t believe where I’m at right now. It’s also awesome how my success will impact my children’s future.”

Welding Bridge Program
Adult Basic Education works with Minnesota West Community & Technical College, the Redwood Area Development Corporation and manufacturing employers such as Activeaid, Inc. to “bridge” adults into high demand and highly-paid welding jobs with Minnesota manufacturers.

FastTRAC (Training, Resources and Credentialing) programs partner ABE with colleges, workforce centers, social services providers and employers to transition adults into training for high-demand, higher paid career pathways. Outside of formal FastTRAC programs, Minnesota ABE also partners with employers and community resources to help adults develop workforce skills, obtain credentials and most importantly, to think in terms of continuing education and ‘stackable’ credentials for lifelong careers.

ABE Influence on Students and Higher Education (2007 - 2012)

- One-fifth of ABE students enrolled in credit or non-credit courses at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) within two years after their ABE service year.
- On average, ABE learners registered for 21.8 credits in 7.2 classes during or within one year after their ABE service year.
- Of credit students across five fall courses (2007-2011), nearly three-quarters (72.6 percent) of ABE students persisted, transferred, or graduated by their first spring semester.
- 3,765 ABE students earned a total of 5,205 sub-baccalaureate awards from MnSCU between fiscal years 2008 and 2012.
- 66.8 percent of ABE graduates were employed in the second calendar quarter after their fiscal year of graduation, earning a median wage rate of $11.92 an hour.

Successful FastTRAC Programming in Southwest Minnesota

ABE programs in Southwest Minnesota have developed an extensive and solid set of relationships that foster career pathway opportunities for adults.

Pre-Health Care Bridge Program
Minnesota ABE works with Minnesota West Community & Technical College, the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (SW MN PIC) and healthcare employers such as Avera to “bridge” adults into promising healthcare careers.

Prairie View Healthcare Center
According to Jason Swanson, Executive Director of the Prairie View Healthcare Center in Tracy, MN, “The biggest problem I have had in these facilities has been hiring qualified staff. Two years ago I learned about the FastTRAC Health Care Training program. I have hired individuals from this program and they have been among my best hires. Not only do they have the basic knowledge and certification required, but they also have enhanced math for the healthcare field, computer skills and employability along with soft skills. Their motivation and commitment to their training translates into the workplace.”

Brothers: Engineering and Alexander
Engineering and Alexander moved to Redwood Falls with their family in 2007. After finishing high school, they got jobs at McDonald’s. Their mother learned about the FastTRAC program through a Community Education bulletin and encouraged them to enroll. Although welding was new to him, it came easy, and Engineering became the most skillful welder in his class. Alexander was grateful for the program after feeling like he was “going nowhere.” Activeaid, Inc. has since hired both of them. Engineering is a talented TIG welder, a skill that is hard to find while Alexander’s niche is in powder coating metals used to make the company’s sought after rehabilitation chairs. Skills training and gainful employment has also raised the prospect of saving money, going back to college, and thinking more clearly about the future.
Minnesota ABE Provides Skills for Leaving Public Assistance
Overcoming Educational Barriers for Better Economics

Over the past half-decade, poverty in both the United States and Minnesota has been on the rise, especially among children. Many Minnesotans who live in poverty, and particularly unemployed parents hard hit by economic downturns, seek assistance through programs like the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).

Absence of workplace skills, such as lack of self-management and lack of job-seeking skills, was also high on the list. Moreover, ten to seventeen percent of MFIP recipients are refugees or other legal non-citizens with many of these individuals deficient in basic English skills. *(Welfare Research Brief, February 2013).*

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs help improve the educational skills of adults in poverty and on public assistance. Additionally, ABE programs integrate skills which are important for job attainment and retention. ABE also provides English Language Learning (ELL) classes for adults who need them.

Reducing Taxpayer Costs

ABE services are highly cost-effective. The average annual cost to the taxpayer per ABE enrollee is only $763. Improving literacy and overall educational skills is one of the most effective strategies for assisting families in poverty to become economically self-sufficient. Adults on public assistance who improve their basic education skills tend to improve their earnings situation as well.

According to a report by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, education is the second most serious barrier facing MFIP recipients after financial barriers.

Approximately 11% of ABE learners self-reported that they received some form of public assistance (this is surely an undercount).

42% of MFIP recipients do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. Of the MFIP high school graduation recipients, many have reading and math abilities well below the 12th grade level with low literacy levels causing difficulty for this group to find and retain jobs.

- DHS2007
Neighborhood House: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

ABE and Community-Based Organizations
Organizations such as Neighborhood House in Saint Paul have been working for years to break the cycle of poverty. Helping low-income communities stabilize their lives through food shelves, crisis intervention, refugee resettlement, health access and programming for at-risk youth has been foundational to their mission.

At the same time, Neighborhood House has recognized the vital importance of education in assisting these families to move from “survive to thrive”. Neighborhood House serves as a vibrant example of a community-based organization that works to provide quality ABE in addition to basic needs services. Along with GED® preparation, English, civics education and math programming, their College Access initiative includes adult learners as well as high school students.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: ABE to College Pathways
Liliana Sanchez attended GED classes at the Neighborhood House and earned her GED in December of 2013. Since then she has worked closely with Neighborhood House’s College Access Specialist and College Readiness Instructor to complete college preparation work, explore degree pathways, and develop her future plans. In 2015 she will attend Saint Paul College. She continues to communicate with students in Neighborhood House programs and is an inspiration for many to complete their GED and beyond.

Gabriela Alonso first started coming to Neighborhood House Adult Education classes back in April 2010 before gaining employment. Three years later, she returned to the program when her previous employment ended. From 2013 through 2014 she participated in the Advanced English class, where she was a leader in the classroom, encouraging students with kind determination and optimism. After six months of studying English, she joined an intensive workplace training program available through the Neighborhood House’s West Side Employment Collaborative students to build her professional and academic skills. Working with these trainers and the Adult Education teachers, she has enrolled in Saint Paul College where she is currently earning a certificate in translation.

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