

Research Topic in Adult Basic Education (ABE): Preparing Learners for Post-Secondary Education

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 (ABE) programs better prepare learners for post-secondary education?

Sample research questions:

- Analyze an ABE program and how it prepares learners for post-secondary education or training. What are the strengths and challenges of the program and how are they measured?
- Compare two ABE programs that serve learners preparing for post-secondary education. How do programming and learner success rates differ? Which program had learners test higher on the Accuplacer, requiring learners to take fewer developmental education courses? Which program had more learners test beyond developmental education?
- Develop case studies of ABE learners as they apply for post-secondary education, study for and take the Accuplacer, enter college and take courses. In what ways was the learner prepared for post-secondary education? How was that demonstrated? What did the learner struggle with most? In what areas was the learner most successful?
- What Minnesota statistics are available regarding percentage of learners applying to post-secondary institutions who are required to take developmental courses? How many of these are current or former ABE learners?
 - Of those learners how many complete the program of study for which they applied?
 - Of those who do not complete, what do those learners say were the reasons they did not?
 - Of those who do complete, how do they feel ABE services or developmental courses helped them?
- What do academically underprepared applicants to post-secondary institutions want the ABE field to know?

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- What type of learning environment is effective in helping academically underprepared college learners succeed?
- What services would help increase the number of academically underprepared learners meet their educational goals?

Background:

Defining the Issue

Many ABE learners want to enter post-secondary education to improve their career potential. A large number of ABE learners struggle to succeed in post-secondary education or may be forced to take non-credit earning courses to build their basic skills. Research demonstrates that learners who apply to colleges and are referred to developmental classes before taking credit classes do not enter, persist or complete post-secondary programs at the same rate as those who do not need developmental classes. The ABE field would welcome research that could inform programs on how to better prepare adults for post-secondary education.

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 the entire state of Minnesota in schools, correctional facilities and nonprofit organizations.

Transition education=State ABE initiative to prepare undereducated/underemployed adults to be successfully employed workers through collaboration with post-secondary institutions and workforce centers.

Accuplacer = A standardized placement test that measures reading, mathematics, writing and language use skills and is used by colleges to determine if remedial or developmental classes in reading, writing or math are required to prepare a learner for college level work.

Target Learner Population

The studies would target learners enrolled in ABE who have the goal of entering post-secondary education.

Resources/ contacts:

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Adult Basic Education Web Site

<http://mnabe.themlc.org>

Literacy Action Network Web Site

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