

# **Research Topic in Adult Basic Education (ABE): Serving English Language Learners (ELL)**

## **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 to Best Serve Intermediate and Advanced ESL (ELL) Learners in Adult Basic Education (ABE)

## **Sample research questions:**

- What teaching methods work best in an Intermediate or Advanced ESL class?
- A study comparing two intermediate or advanced ESL classes and their results.
- What keeps intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners motivated in learning?
- Find best practices in intermediate and/or advanced ESL programs.
- Compare intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners' goals to what the CASAS assessment measures.
- What are the educational and work outcomes of intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners after they leave the ABE program?
- What type of class content or focus do ESL learners prefer, such as work-focused, life skills, or general knowledge?
- What type of learning environment do intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners expect?
- What do intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners want the ABE staff to know? (This could be an analysis of several interviews and/or focus groups with ESL learners.)
- Why do intermediate and/or advanced ESL learners discontinue attending ABE classes?

## **Background:**

### *Defining the Issue*

Currently, many ABE programs are having trouble meeting the NRS level completion targets for serving intermediate and advanced ESL learners. Research should be conducted to help the field learn what types of instructional practices best serve adult learners in intermediate and/or advanced ESL.

## **Research Topic in Adult Basic Education (ABE): Serving English Language Learners (ELL)**

### *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.

CASAS = Comprehensive Adult Learner Assessment System; this is the most common ESL standardized assessment used in Minnesota.

ESL = English as a Second Language (English Language Learning or ELL). ESL classes teach English to immigrants, refugees, and other nonnative English speakers.

Intermediate ESL = Adult learners in this official state and federal category include learners who test at low intermediate or high intermediate levels according to accepted standardized assessments, typically CASAS. For a more in-depth definition of low and high intermediate ESL, go to [http://mnabe.themlc.org/Accountability\\_and\\_NRS.html](http://mnabe.themlc.org/Accountability_and_NRS.html) (click on Assessment and Reporting Requirements, page 27).

Advanced ESL = Adult learners in this official state and federal category include learners who test at the advanced ESL level according to accepted standardized assessments, typically CASAS. For a more in-depth definition of advanced ESL, go to [http://mnabe.themlc.org/Accountability\\_and\\_NRS.html](http://mnabe.themlc.org/Accountability_and_NRS.html) (click on Assessment and Reporting Requirements, page 27).

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 in at least one of the following levels: low intermediate ESL, high intermediate ESL or advanced ESL.

### **Resources/ contacts:**

Brad Hasskamp, Adult Basic Education Policy and Operations Specialist  
Minnesota Department of Education  
[brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us](mailto:brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us)  
(651) 582-8594

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

CASAS Web Site  
[www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org)

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