

Research Topics in Adult Basic Education: Comparing Student Outcomes of FastTRAC Programs and Traditional Post-Secondary Programs

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:

What are outcomes of FastTRAC programs and how do they compare to traditional post-secondary programs?

Background:

Defining the issue

A continuing state initiative focuses on transitioning ABE learners to post-secondary or training programs. Integrated ABE and post-secondary instruction (such as Washington State's iBEST program) are promising models being promoted and supported on a national level. ABE consortia throughout the state have begun FastTRAC programming with the goal of learner success in post-secondary or training programs that lead to living wage employment. Research is needed to determine if FastTRAC programming increases completion rates and leads to employment.

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.

MN FastTRAC Initiative=

Training, Resources And Credentialing. A statewide stackable credentials framework for delivering education, training and employment services to enable low-wage and educationally underprepared Minnesota adults to access a continuum of education and job training opportunities that lead to the attainment of in-demand occupational certificates or credentials,

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and ultimately to jobs paying a family supporting wage. The framework includes coordinated programming and policy alignment with ABE, Workforce Centers, MNSCU and Community Based Organizations.

Sample research questions:

- How many learners completing FastTRAC programs are enrolled in post-secondary or training programs?
- How many learners completing FastTRAC programs are successfully employed?
- Can success rates be compared with ABE learners who did not complete a FastTRAC program and are now in post-secondary school?
- If learners who have completed a FastTRAC program are not successful, what issues did they encounter that prevented them from completing their post-secondary or training program?
- Some ABE programs are collaborating with post-secondary institutions to provide FastTRAC programs that are based on the Washington State iBEST model. What are the outcomes of these programs? How do the programs compare with the traditional models of developmental education?