

CONSORTIUM

Providing free basic education and English classes for adults from all backgrounds.

Contextualized Instruction

The link between classroom
and real-life situations

A First for ABE

ABE instructor is semi-finalist
for Teacher of the Year award

Metro North
ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

– Sponsored by Community Education –

First ABE Teacher in Minnesota to be nominated for Teacher of the Year!

Congratulations to Donna Escobedo for being named as a semi-finalist

The announcement came on a cold, snowy day. After spending two hours commuting to the Blaine Learning lab, Donna Escobedo learned that she was the first ever ABE teacher in Minnesota to be nominated for Education Minnesota’s Teacher of the Year.

Education Minnesota, the 70,000-member statewide educators union, organizes and underwrites the Teacher of the Year program. Typically a Pre-K through 12th grade teacher award, 2016 was the first year the program took adult basic education nominations. They originally began with 115 qualified candidates from across the state, narrowed the pool down to 25, and finally, the top 10 semi-finalists were honored at a banquet on May 15th.

Donna has been with the Blaine Learning Lab for over nine years. She currently teaches in both the GED and the MN Standard Adult Diploma programs. She has presented locally, statewide, and nationally on ABE-focused teaching strategies. She has been an active participant and trainer with many Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) initiatives over the years. Her passion and dedication to her learners, and the profession, are the true driving forces behind her many accomplishments.

According to Donna: “I enjoy the challenge of working with adult students—they bring something different to the classroom. Different skills and different goals, and I really enjoy helping them get to the next level whether it’s work or a training program. They are really motivated. It’s a challenge, but I look at it as the opportunity to help them. I see people educate themselves, reach their goals, and change their lives.”

All of us here at Metro North ABE are so proud of Donna! Looking towards the future, we hope to see many more ABE nominations for this prestigious award.



About Metro North ABE

Our mission is to inspire and challenge all learners to reach their full potential. We will teach the skills needed to succeed as responsible citizens in our changing world.

Our vision is to provide programs that effectively develop the skills needed by individuals to achieve their goals.

Location Supervisors & Site Coordinators

- Pat Adams: Community Education Asst. Manager, Anoka-Hennepin
- Patrick Hobot: Supervisor, Anoka Technical College and
Supervisor, Anoka-Ramsey Community College
- Kathleen Moriarty: Supervisor, Columbia Heights & Brooklyn Center
- Pam Moriarity: Site Coordinator, Elk River
- Melody Panek: Site Coordinator, St. Francis
- Kara Rotramel: Site Coordinator, Forest Lake
- Cori Sendl: Director of Community Education, Centennial
- Molly Stewart: Supervisor, Blaine

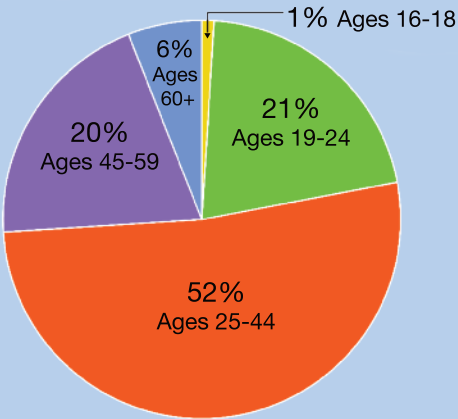
ABE 101

Program Data Report

Metro North ABE provided enrollment information to 4,527 individuals this program year. We had 2,560 learners enrolled in classes receiving instruction to improve basic skills in reading, math, writing, and/or speaking English. ABE classes recorded more than 300,400 contact hours that support funding.

Here are some fun facts and success stories about what ABE does in our community:

- Ages of our ABE Learners:



- 36% of our learners gained one or more educational functioning levels in basic skills by attending classes taught by licensed staff and assisted by our amazing volunteers.
- Learners came from 108 different countries, not including the US, and spoke 96 different languages, not including English.
- 106 learners who had the goal of gaining employment, and 116 learners who had the goal of retaining their employment, met their goal.
- 190 learners who had the goal of entering post-secondary training and/or education, met their goal.
- 88 learners who had attended adult basic education classes at one of our sites, completed the GED® credential.
- 53 learners who had a goal of completing their remaining Diploma credits and earning their HS Diploma, met their goal.

Data with Linda

Annually, on June 1st, all Minnesota ABE programs are required to submit a report to the Minnesota Department of Education. This report includes:

- Consortium member information (Eight member districts)
- Contact information (AH ISD 11 as fiscal agent)
- Signature to certify we will be compliant with all federal, state and local laws, regulations, and policies
- Supplementary information (Five tables)

Two of the tables we submit include Table A (enrollee contact hours) and Table 4 (participant educational gains by NRS educational functioning level).

Table A is used to determine our contact hour funding, which is the largest portion of our funding. This year we reported 300,392 hours, compared to 296,959 hours last year. Stable contact hours, a result of quality, relevant, and accessible programming from year to year, results in stable ABE programs.

Last year: 296,959 contact hours
This year: 300,392 contact hours

Table 4 is used to determine program quality using the National Reporting System (NRS). The NRS system is an outcome-based reporting system for state-administered, federally-funded adult education programs. Because a portion of our annual funding (10%) comes from the federal government, ABE programs are expected to reach ‘benchmarks’ of student achievement for each of twelve levels.

Historically, Metro North ABE has been able to reach all the NRS level benchmarks. Like most MN ABE programs, the recent federal insistence that we do not post-test students until after forty hours of instruction has resulted in poor student performance on Table 4. In the past three years we have been unable to meet more than three benchmarks. This year we met one benchmark. As a consortium, we will continue to explore and implement effective strategies to improving our student performance as expressed in Table 4.

Contextualized Instruction

The link between classroom and real-life situations

What is contextualized instruction?

How do adults learn best?

Which skills and content are most relevant to help adult learners reach their personal, academic, and professional goals?

These are questions that all adult educators strive to answer through curriculum development and lesson plans that meet learners’ needs.

“In adult education, the term ‘Contextualized Instruction’ describes a set of teaching, learning, and assessment practices that:

1. are aimed directly at developing the skills and knowledge that adults need to deal with specific situations or perform specific tasks, and
2. that they have identified as important and meaningful to themselves “right now” in their everyday lives.

“In addition, rather than focus only on

the possession of basic skills and knowledge, contextualized instruction focuses on the active application of those skills and that knowledge ‘in a context.’ (And this context should be as ‘real-world’ as is feasible.)”¹

In recent years, contextualized instruction has been a focus for adult basic education. With the implementation of the 2014 Workforce and Innovation Act (WIOA), more emphasis in adult basic education programs has been put on contextualized instruction that prepares learners for transitioning to postsecondary education and careers.

Contextualized instruction is not new. English language classes for refugee and immigrant adults have been focused on teaching language through the context of life skill topics for years. GED

preparation classes have been focused on teaching reading, writing, math, and language skills through the context of social studies and science. Writing classes have been focused on teaching grammar and writing skills through practical applications of writing a letter or a résumé.

Adults learn best when the content is meaningful to them and they are able to apply their new knowledge and skills in real life. College and career knowledge



“Adults learn best when the content is meaningful to them and they are able to apply their new knowledge and skills in real life.”

and skills are necessary for adult learners to move beyond ABE classes and to be successful in reaching their goals. Career-specific pathway and credential classes focus on teaching academic skills through content related to an identified career that allows for direct application.

How are Metro North ABE programs and staff being supported in these efforts?

1. In recent years, partnerships amongst adult basic education, MN workforce centers, and MNSCU institutions have developed and offered stackable credential programming for career pathways. Metro North ABE has offered such classes through FastTRAC/Pathways to Prosperity state grants in healthcare, precision sheet metal manufacturing, and office professional careers. Through regional transitions partnerships, the consortium has most recently been piloting a Food Service Career pathway, offering classes to prepare for Food Manager certification: Intro to Food Service Careers, Food Handler, and Food Manager. Within these focused, career-specific classes, learners are acquiring job content and academic skills but they are also acquiring employability skills, or soft skills, to be effective on the job.

2. This past year, the state ABE office offered a Career Focused Basic Skills Curriculum Development Course. The Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA) worked with the College and Career Pathways Institute (CCPI) at LaGuardia College to offer this professional development opportunity to ABE instructors and administrators in Minnesota. Metro North ABE had representatives from various sites participate. The course was designed for those who were already teaching in career pathway classes or those who were interested in learning about contextualizing instruction to a specific sector. La Guardia offers GED and career pathway

programming through three Bridges to Career and College programs: Bridge to Health, Bridge to Science, and Bridge to Business. All of the bridge classes offer contextualized math and literacy instruction.

3. Statewide ABE programs are going through a multi-year process of adopting and implementing newly developed content standards: the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards; the North Star Digital Literacy standards; and the Academic, College, and Employability standards (ACES). Programs working to align standards, content, and assessments. Having clear standards for ABE programs helps instructors when they are contextualizing their classroom instruction.

Metro North ABE has offered two years of study circle instruction for staff on implementing ACES across all levels of instruction. ACES has a goal of providing contextualized instruction that integrates post-secondary education and training readiness, employability skills, and career readiness. Staff have also participated in CCR trainings at state diploma trainings, in-house staff development events, and state conferences. Following the initial trainings, staff engage and look at CCR and ACES together as they plan lessons to better meet learners’ needs.

4. Metro North ABE Program Supervisors participate in a West Hennepin Area Managers (WHAM) group that includes a focus on Transitions to Post Secondary programming. Over the years, Metro North ABE has developed and shared contextualized curriculum with this group as well as benefited from curriculum developed through these other consortia.

¹Peggy McGuire, EFF Trainer & Content Expert, Center for Literacy Studies and Duren Thompson, EFFTIPS Technical Editor, Center for Literacy Studies “FAQ: What is Contextualized Instruction”,EFF Tips, May 29, 2012

Contextualized Instruction with Microsoft Office & Health Care Pathways

Microsoft Office classes are one of the contextualized curriculum options that Metro North Adult Basic Education offers. Since many participants are involved in job searching, these four-hour workshops use exercises to format cover letters and résumés, design professional presentations, and create (as well as analyze) a budget. The foundational concepts presented through authentic practice allow students to develop basic proficiency, thereby giving them skills to leverage in their employment search.

The Health Care Pathways FastTRAC program is another contextualized curriculum option. Educational content of the Prep Class, taught by a Metro North instructor, prepares enrolled students for two college courses: Holistic Healing and Nursing Assistant. Curriculum includes a class syllabus that mirrors the design used in college, so that students can practice using it to plan and complete class requirements. Online tools, such as Google Drive, are used to access course materials and complete assignments, so students can gain experience in navigating online learning

platforms similar to what will be encountered in college. When learning about HIPAA as an important job-related practice, students will work in small groups to read, discuss and respond to articles from current events. Additionally, students will use authentic point-of-view scenarios to explore the topic from multiple angles. The curriculum includes writing a research paper that is due in one of the college courses, allowing students to complete a class-specific assignment before stepping foot in the college classroom!



Contextualized Learning in Metro North ABE

Examples of contextualized instruction across the consortium

Adult Education Center Columbia Heights-Fridley

It's Saturday morning, and a small group of learners are at the Adult Education Center – Columbia Heights/Fridley to participate in the Food Handler pilot class. Most students work in food service operation at the entry level—and are motivated to improve their skills for a promotion.

The Food Handler pilot is the newest of several contextualized classes Metro North ABE offers. In career pathway contextualized instruction, students develop academic and workplace skills in reading and math with authentic industry materials and performance tasks.

Today's lesson involves the study of bacteria and proper hand washing techniques. Students rub glo-gel lotion on their hands, simulating the spread of bacteria. Instructor Melody Chalmers dims the lights and passes around black lights while leading a discussion of their observations.

"Look, gross!" one student exclaims, pointing to her cell phone case, which glowed an iridescent yellow. "Now I see why we have to wash hands after taking a quick phone call on the job—even though you can't see it, the bacteria is still there!" said another.

The pilot class meets Saturdays at the Adult Education Center – Columbia Heights/Fridley through August, and provides foundational skills for the Food Manager classes (which have also been offered at the Elk River, and Blaine locations).

Lifelong Learning Center St. Francis

Learners at St. Francis Adult Basic Education (ABE) study to prepare for the naturalization test from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), while at the same time learning English by reading, writing, listening, and speaking about the exam.

While studying for the naturalization test, students listen to spoken English while reading written English about American history online. The students write down any new words they do not understand, read about the words in an online dictionary, and discuss the words with a volunteer or teacher to help clarify meaning. The learner is learning more English as it pertains to American history as they use a computer and prepare for the test.

It is very important for student learning to imbed English lessons into whatever the student is studying at the time. This allows the learner to be more immersed in the language they are learning, which can lead to faster language input (reading and listening) as well as output (speaking and writing.)

Blaine Learning Lab Blaine

Learners working to earn a Minnesota State Standard Adult High School Diploma are required to show competency in developing a future pathway. To provide learners a more meaningful experience in their planning and a solid foundation after graduation, staff at the Blaine Learning Lab tie learners' interests into additional competency requirements.

Their official state-required writing sample must focus on a topic that is



related to learner's desired future career. One current adult learner is planning on becoming a personal trainer and has chosen to research and write a paper on motivation and goal setting. Another learner is interested in Certified Nursing Assistant training, so she is researching retention rates among working C.N.A.'s.

To show competency in geometry, one learner created a project based on his present job as a concrete worker. He used what he knew, and what he learned, to determine the amount of concrete he actually needed to complete a job he was working on at the time.

As a way to tie the career exploration workshop into English Language Arts, learners are required to produce a writing sample based on their next steps. This time, however, the focus is on their personal goals, educational opportunities, and potential barriers to achieving success.

Graduation 2016

June 8, 2016 — On a beautiful summer evening, 56 of the 141 recent Adult Basic Education graduates came together with the support of their family and friends to be publicly recognized for their achievements, both academic and personal.

On this special night, several students shared their personal stories of what this achievement means to them. Fatima Abbas and Christina Vilayvanh, who earned their State Diploma, and Dulce Santibanez who earned her GED®, all spoke at the ceremony, highlighting their paths to success and the personal motivations that drove them each day.

Other guest speakers included two ABE graduates who are now paying it forward by being volunteers at Metro North. Paul Guillaume earned his GED® years ago and started volunteering in 2015 after completing his Ph.D. Robert (Bob) Lund earned his State Diploma in 2015, and immediately picked up the volunteer role in order to continue working alongside the teachers, students, and other volunteers he

has come to know so well. Both of these men exemplify the outstanding capabilities of our learners.

Each year, Metro North ABE hosts a graduation ceremony and reception for their program graduates. Students are recognized for their achievements in GED®, Credit Recovery Diploma, or the new State Standard Adult High School Diploma granted by the State of Minnesota. This is the second year of the new State Diploma; last year 32 learners earned their diploma between the old and new programs.

In addition, the invitation to participate in the ceremony is extended to other GED® graduates who have tested out at one of Metro North's GED® test locations, without needing the instructional prep classes before taking their exams. We believe that everyone deserves to be recognized for their achievements, no matter how quickly, or how long, it takes them to reach their goals.

Congratulations to all our exceptional graduates! We look forward to next year's ceremony, and celebrating our learners' many accomplishments.

Thank You Volunteers!

A big thank you to all our volunteers for the continuous support you provide our learners and our staff. You help us reach more learners on an individual basis, meeting each student with enthusiasm and focused attention. ABE is successful because of each of you!

Notably, we have welcomed many more skills-based volunteers offering leadership in specific content areas including math, writing, and workplace

and employment skills among other special projects.

Metro North ABE had a total of 227 active volunteers donating a total of 15,677 hours of service during the 2015-2016 data year. Our volunteer program is worth an additional \$369,350 of staffing time and talent.

Welcome New Community Education Directors

Metro North ABE leadership includes a board of directors established by our leaders in community education from partnering school districts. We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new Metro North ABE board members.

Lisa Rahn joined ISD #15 St. Francis as their Director for Community Education. Al Ickler joined ISD#11 Anoka-Hennepin as the Community Education Director. And most recently, Cory Fransen has joined ISD #728 Elk River/Rogers/Zimmerman/Otsego as the Community Director of Engagement.

We are happy to have you as part of our team and look forward to your leadership in the future of ABE.



Metro North Adult Basic Education (ABE)
1201 89th Ave NE, Suite 335
Blaine, MN 55434

Postal Area

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CONSORTIUM

Providing free basic education and English classes for adults from all backgrounds.

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- Anoka Community College Academic Support Center
- Blaine Learning Lab
- Brooklyn Center Community Corner
- Brooklyn Center Lutheran Church of the Master
- Centennial Adult Continuing Education
- Columbia Heights Adult Education Center
- Elk River Community Education Center
- St. Francis Lifelong Learning Center

