

Minnesota ADULT BASIC EDUCATION - A Program that Works, Addressing Statewide Problems

Minnesota ABE is the only statewide program that helps educationally underprepared adults gain the skills needed to be competitive in the job market, enter higher education, and provide their families with better lives. A broad range of cost-efficient programs responsive to the educational needs of Minnesota adults are provided. The return on investment is high. Last year:

- Minnesota ABE granted over 7,500 GEDs and adult diplomas - one in every 10 diplomas issued in Minnesota.
- Over 73,300 adult learners received ABE services at a cost of less than \$678 per student.
- Two-thirds of all those served were parents - as they improve their own skills, they are better able to support their children academically and economically.
- Over 32,000 New Americans received ESL instruction.
- Over 25,000 adults received assistance in improving basic skills.
- 1,750 individuals attained citizenship.



Many Low-Skilled Minnesota Adults Seek to Improve Skills during Recession - ABE Responds Rapidly

Minnesota has faced high unemployment throughout the current recession, as businesses downsize and jobs disappear. Minnesotans with the lowest skills levels have suffered severe job losses.

As the Minnesota economy struggles, the number of unemployed and underemployed Minnesotans working to improve basic skills is soaring. Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs around the state report service levels 15%, 25%, and even 50% higher than last year. Educationally underprepared adults are using ABE to brush up basic skills, allowing them to move forward in the job market, pursue higher education, attain citizenship, and better care for their families.

Longterm Problems Loom

45% of new jobs projected to require post secondary credential

Apart from the current recession, Minnesota's economy faces longterm problems.

Growth in the state labor supply is forecast to decrease through the next several decades. Labor market shrinkage will become more common after 2015 as baby boomers retire. There will continue to be fewer younger workers to replace them.

Available replacements will be less well educated than those they replace. Research indicates that the equivalent of one year post-secondary education is needed to obtain a job paying a living wage. Three in five Minnesota workers - nearly two million adults between ages 18 and 64 - have not completed a postsecondary credential at the associate level or higher.



While about 25 percent of today's jobs require a college degree or postsecondary credential, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected that about 45 percent of all new jobs over the next decade will require a college degree or postsecondary credential. Shortages of skilled workers are forecast for many occupations, limiting prospects for economic growth.

Costs to Minnesota Will Grow without Training and Education

Inadequate educational and occupational skill preparation is a major cause of low wages and stagnant income for individuals and their families, an impediment to business and regional competitiveness, and a drain on the overall economy.

The average cost of taxpayers of a high school dropout, vs. a high school completer, has been calculated over the working life of each high school dropout at \$292,000 by Northwestern University's Center for Labor Market Studies. This is based on lower payroll taxes collected, plus the increased cost of various programs of public support, and the increased possibility of incarceration costs.

Minnesota ADULT BASIC EDUCATION - Developing and Implementing Solutions that Work

The vast majority of adults who will be working in 2020 are already in the labor force. Two-thirds of the 2020 workforce is already beyond high school age. Training and re-training current workers will be crucial to meeting labor market demands and supporting a competitive economy.

MN ABE is working intensively with MNSCU, DEED, Workforce Centers, the business community, and non-profit organizations to assist low-wage and educationally underprepared adults to develop basic skills while also mastering job skills and/or prepare for college level work. Referrals are being streamlined to insure that people receive seamless services that meet a wide range of needs.

Instructional innovations include "blended content" where basic skills providers work alongside postsecondary instructors to deliver occupationally focused courses while helping students also master basic skill content, leading to successful completion of post-secondary credentials linked to employment. ABE programs are supporting "transition to employment" classes at ABE sites as well as at Workforce Centers and community organizations that focus on employment readiness

Courses are built around providing a supply of workers trained for occupations identified by employers as high-need, informed by state labor market statistics and the experience of staff at Workforce Centers around the state.

As the recession eases, Minnesota employers will benefit through a supply of workers trained for new jobs, and those workers will be able to earn enough money to support their families.



Prepared by Literacy Minnesota

www.literacyminnesota.org, a professional advocacy organization