



NetNews

an online newsletter devoted to adult literacy

September, 2005

LDA of Minnesota

Vol.6, No.1

Supplemental Services

LDA of Minnesota has been awarded supplemental services grant funding for FY 2006. LDA's grant activities promote outcome-based achievement for adult learners throughout Minnesota. LDA's activities focus on improving core performance indicators such as level-change, completion of a GED or diploma, and the transition to post-secondary training/education or work. LDA activities help to improve basic skills and assist local programs to identify "Best Practices" that lead to "teacher change" and learner progress.

LDA's grant activities promote outcome-based achievement for adult learners...

The purpose of this first issue of the 2005-2006 school year is to describe LDA's activities available to any ABE program manager, instructor, tutor, or learner in the state of Minnesota **at no cost** through supplemental service grant funds.

Activities of most interest to ABE providers or practitioners statewide include:

1. Learning disabilities assessments
2. Web-based reading assessment
3. Practitioner circles/trainings on *The Adult Reading Toolkit -Edition 4*
4. Prescriptive reading tutoring and instructor or tutor coaching
5. Practitioner reading research
6. LD information and consultation

1. Learning Disabilities Assessments

During FY 2005, LDA completed close to 100 learning disabilities assessments statewide for adult learners referred by ABE, GED, or ESL instructors. This service will continue with three types of psycho-educational assessments:

1. **Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)** for ABE learners who demonstrate "unexpected" and significant academic difficulties and seek a comprehensive learning profile and documentation of a specific learning disability.
2. **GED Accommodations (GED)** for GED learners who demonstrate "unexpected" and significant academic difficulties and seek to request GED testing accommodations.
3. **Learning Disabilities/ESL (LD/ESL)** for non-native English speakers who are struggling with the acquisition of language and/or literacy skills despite adequate English exposure and instruction. Based on two years of pilot experience, LDA will be more selective about which ESL learners are appropriate for this type of formal assessment.

All three assessments involve a process of screening, application, interview, formal testing, test scoring, interpretation, and written reporting. Regardless of the diagnosis outcome, all reports will include recommendations for instruction and/or accommodation that can be utilized by the instructor and learner alike.



NetNews is supported by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education, Adult Basic Education.

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Learners living **within the seven county metro area will be tested at LDA** with feedback conferences held at the ABE site.

➤Contact Marn Frank: mf@ldaminnesota.org

Learners living **outside of the seven county metro area will be tested at an ABE center site** as long as there are two or more referrals to pre-arrange as a “traveling assessment”.

➤Contact Mike Anderson: ma@ldaminnesota.org

2. Web-based Reading Assessment

During FY 2005, LDA piloted two online reading assessments at two different metro ABE program sites: Adult Options in Education (Hopkins) and Winnetka Learning Center (Robbinsdale). The more applicable of the two assessments was determined and two additional outstate sites will be included in this continuing pilot. The purpose of the online reading assessment is to provide ABE instructors or tutors with a readily accessible tool that provides a profile of reading strengths and weaknesses.

Research indicates that global reading assessments, such as CASAS or TABE, often do not inform the instructor or learner about specific reading strengths and weaknesses. Further reading assessment, either formal or informal, may be necessary for adults in order to determine the “gaps in knowledge” that can then be addressed through instruction. However, most additional and available reading assessments are geared towards children and need to be modified for adults.

LDA is working with the reading assessment publisher on modifications for the population of struggling adult readers who typically attend ABE programs. The long-range goal of this pilot is to increase use and application of this assessment across the state and eventually improve learner progress as measured by CASAS or TABE.

➤Contact Mike Anderson: ma@ldaminnesota.org

3. Prescriptive Reading Tutoring and Instructor or Tutor Coaching

One of LDA’s staff development activities for FY 2006 is prescriptive reading tutoring for ABE learners and follow-up coaching for instructors or tutors. LDA has been funded to provide individual tutoring sessions to 12 learners from any metro area ABE program. These learners will be identified through assessment or observation as having **significant reading difficulties at beginning or intermediate levels**. They will be referred to LDA and attend up to 10 tutoring sessions at LDA to establish a prescriptive personal educational plan using strategies and materials from *The ART-Edition* 4. This plan will be documented in a portfolio and shared with the local ABE instructor and/or tutor. Further coaching at the ABE site (up to 2 additional sessions) will be provided to support the recommended prescriptive reading instruction.

The intended outcomes are to improve the reading and spelling skills (and eventually CASAS or TABE scores) of the referred learners, increase the understanding, application, and use of research-based reading strategies (or “teacher change”), and promote advocacy skills in adults with significant reading difficulties.

➤Contact Marn Frank: mf@ldaminnesota.org for more information or to make a referral for this limited pilot activity. **NOTE:** Referring ABE instructors must be willing to provide referral information to LDA before tutoring and arrange for continuation of the prescriptive reading instruction at the ABE site.

4. Practitioner Reading Research

Another staff development activity is LDA’s participation in Practitioner Research with Bella Hanson, ABE Consultant. Up to 15 ABE providers will be invited to invest in developing their own reading research project. Using the NCSALL (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy) training guide, participants will attend three sessions leading to a personal reading research question, a plan for teacher change, data collection, data analysis, written reporting, and presentation of findings and conclusions at Summer Intensive Training 2006. Previous participants have shared of the value of this project, the impact on their teaching, and increased understanding of practitioner research.

5. Practitioner Circles/Trainings

During FY 2005, LDA provided 30 “practitioner circles” or staff development trainings on *The ART (Adult Reading Toolkit)* and disseminated 700 copies of this nationally recognized resource for adult literacy.

The ART-Edition 4 has been further revised to include notes on the application of reading research to non-native English speakers. It has also been expanded to include more decodable word lists and another Appendix of controlled phrases and sentences for fluency and dictation practice.

LDA prefers to disseminate *The ART-Edition 4* along with two-hour practitioner circles or trainings focused on either “learning to read” for beginning reading instruction or “reading to learn” for intermediate/advanced reading instruction. See the side bar on the right for more information.

Each practitioner circle will include a quick tour of *The ART-Edition 4*, a review of current reading research ideas as applied to adults, demonstration of a beginning or intermediate/advanced lesson plan, a summary of Minnesota practitioner research projects, and time for discussion or questions.

Each participant in a practitioner circle or training will receive the updated copy of *THE ART-Edition 4* (if they don't already have a current edition) and a shrink-wrapped set of the four Appendixes that are ready for copying packaged together in a colorful “toolkit” folder.

LDA requires the commitment of at least ten participants serving ABE, GED, or ESL learners - including volunteers tutors.

➤Contact Marn Frank: mf@ldaminnesota.org to plan a practitioner circle at your program site or to request the expanded Appendixes.



The ART - Edition 4 was

developed by LDA of Minnesota with ABE, ESL, and GED instructors, tutors, and learners in mind. It includes a teacher resource of six chapters covering all four components of reading instruction, a toolkit of activities, and four reproducible Appendixes of sounds, decodable words, sight words, and phrases/sentences for fluency and dictation practice.

The purpose of *The ART-Edition 4* and the complementary practitioner circle or training is to bridge research with ABE practice and reality.

“LEARNING TO READ”with *The ART*

ABE learners, native and non-native English speakers, may experience difficulty with reading skills. They may know words by sight, but struggle with decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling), fluent reading, and comprehension of text. They fail to show progress on silent reading tests such as CASAS or TABE because they lack basic reading skills.

“READING TO LEARN”with *The ART*

ABE learners, native and non-native English speakers, may experience difficulty with intermediate or advanced reading skills. They know how to read, but struggle with multi-syllable words, new vocabulary, or comprehension of longer text. They fail to show progress on silent reading tests such as CASAS or TABE and are challenged by reading material at the pre-GED (6th-8th grade) or GED (9th-12th) level.

6. LD Information and Consultation

During FY 2005, LDA responded to 100 calls for information or consultation from ABE providers statewide. LDA is committed to providing quality information and consultation about learning disabilities or related learning difficulties, instructional strategies, accommodations, best practices for reading, and our grant activities and outcomes. LDA intends to continue providing these services through timely responses to phone call or email questions or concerns.

Contact LDA at 952-922-8374 and ask for Lori Boynton (lb@ldaminnesota.org), Marn Frank (mf@ldaminnesota.org), or Mike Anderson (ma@ldaminnesota.org) if you have questions related to any of the activities LDA is providing this year.

LDA and ADSS Have Joined Forces!

As of September 1, 2005, LDA of Minnesota merged with Attention Deficit Support Services (ADSS). LDA and ADSS have much in common; it is estimated that 30-35 % of persons with learning disabilities also have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders (AD/HD). Many adults with LD or AD/HD share challenging learning, life, and vocational issues.

Together, we face an exciting future of expanding competencies and services to children, youth, adults, and families with learning disabilities, attention deficits, and other related learning difficulties.

LDA will continue to offer ADSS' vital services to the community. ADSS teaches strategies to help create a safe and healthy environment and to succeed at work, school, home and in relationships. These strategies empower those with attention deficits to cope positively with symptoms that affect learning, comprehension, memory, organization, planning, relationships, behavior and more.

ADSS services include:

- A Phone Information Line staffed by professional AD/HD Specialists to help callers determine their needs and locate appropriate resources in our community;
- Monthly educational support groups for AD/HD adults, spouses of AD/HD adults, and parents of AD/HD children;
- Education about AD/HD and coping strategies to use at home, school, work, and in society;
- A quarterly informational newsletter, *Focus On Attention*; and
- A website with information about services and links to other resources in our community.

For a complete fall schedule or to register for a workshop, visit www.ldaminnesota.org/programs/adss.html or call 952-922-8374. If you have questions about AD/HD, call LDA for more information and/or referral to ADSS services.

