

Section 7: Successes and Challenges

7.1 *Provide a brief story of student success that illustrates the power of ABE programming to make positive change for the individuals and communities served. (Be sure to obtain student permission for any personal information or work included.)*

Beginning ESL Student Story:

She came to me with very low self-confidence. Her brother spoke for her during registration. She has been with our program for two years and is a faithful attendee. She has come in early to work on computers, citizenship practice, and job interviewing skills and worked with volunteers on a regular basis. With our help and her own determination, she has obtained her driver's license, citizenship, and a full-time job, and most recently, will be changing jobs to our partner company, Renewal by Andersen. She has also made a level gain in her reading. She won second place in a class spelling bee. Most of all, her self-confidence has increased. She is a well-liked student by her classmates. She started as a quiet student with her head down. Now, she is a funny, confident student, a leader in our class, and an excellent role model for her classmates. Her smile and sense of humor say it all.

Jail Inmate Story:

One inmate was on I believe, his seventh module testimony of eight in our class "Coping with Anger". He had really grown as a person, becoming kind, considerate, and remorseful. This inmate was giving an anger goal testimony during class. He was stating his goals as staying in a healthy drug-free relationship, noting this through his testimony. Finally, he was reaching the end of his testimony. He stated, "Oh yeah, someday I want to visit the Roman Coliseum. At first, I thought he was trying to joke etc... but I soon found that he was serious. I bet when he came into jail, he was not thinking about going to the Roman Coliseum. But when he started his anger testimonies it seemed to give him a new power or strength. It gave him hope. This transformation from an angry, hopeless, and useless person to someone that feels useful, and hopeful is one of the things we are trying to accomplish with ABE in Dakota County Jail.

Book Club Story:

Our book study group just met for the last time today. We had great conversations throughout the study and the students were able to draw on personal, authentic experiences to add to the discussions as they related to the story, practice higher-level thinking & English skills, and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with the group.

The students told me today how proud they were of themselves as this was the first novel in English they ever finished! One of the students told me that her 10-year-old daughter told her how proud she was of her mom that she was reading a novel in English! ABE gives these students the opportunity to meet with a group and accomplish something they would have not thought they could do on their own. It gives them confidence and the courage to keep challenging themselves in other ways which spills out into other areas of their lives. And I told them – I am very proud of them, too!!

GED Student Story:

A student was referred to us from South Washington County Alternative High School. He was recently emancipated from the foster care system in Minnesota. While meeting with the student he discussed his need to drop out of high school so that he could get a job and start “adulting”; however, in the discussion, we agreed that it would be better for him to have a Diploma or GED before that happens so that he can try and have more of a career versus just a job. When we reviewed his academic information, it was abundantly clear that he was behind enough in credits that the diploma was not a good option for him. We shifted our discussion to the GED. He was amicable to the idea; however, he was very clear that he needs to find work. We helped him set up a time to complete the GED Ready tests as well as getting him in contact with a Washington County Youth Employment Counselor to find work and hopefully fill out paperwork for MFIP.

Given the student’s intermittent education and lack of exposure to core standards in math, we were not sure how testing was going to go. We are proud to say that he cleared the MN State Age Waiver in both Mathematics and RLA on his first try. He

agreed this was a doable pathway for him and stated that he will try and find a job to work around our program hours to prep for his GED test.

In five short weeks, this student went from having a very difficult future ahead to accomplishing the following:

1. Getting out of the foster care system.
2. Completing GED Ready tests and passing all of them.
3. Contacting employers and interviewing for a couple of different jobs.
4. Contacting Washington County for additional support services.
5. Taking all 4 GED tests and earning his GED on the first try.
6. Obtaining a job (with benefits) at the Amazon Warehouse.

2022 GED Graduate Testimony:

As an immigrant with a high school diploma and some college experience who needed to get a high school equivalent degree in the US, I chose to come to SoWashCo to help me reach my goals. I first started with the goal of getting my GED in order to apply for an electric apprenticeship through the union.

With my GED completed, I now have the chance to go to college if I want to. Also, having my GED has made it possible to get a higher position in my current job.

I enjoyed my time at SoWashCo and their program because the instructors were always willing to help and support me in whatever ways I needed. They were realistic and helped me set and meet my goals in a timeline that worked for me as a husband, father, and full-time employee.

GED Graduate:

Great Rivers is a place that helped me immensely achieve my goal of getting my GED. The teachers are top rate. They worked with me patiently to help me accelerate step by step. Teachers Jason and Jake helped me personally big time and were very patient with me. Angela was wonderful guiding me through all the processes and procedures to obtain my GED.

Thanks, Great Rivers for providing me with a great place where I could obtain my goal of getting my GED!

Program Intern Email:

I am excited to inform you that I got the job offer from East Ridge High School as a Special Education paraprofessional. I accepted the offer and I am waiting for their response on the next steps. Will keep you posted. Without your help, I wouldn't get this offer and be exposed to so many opportunities. Your guidance and shared experiences have been invaluable. Thanks for guiding me toward the right path. I learned something new from you every day and I am so lucky to work with you. Thank you for your guidance and leadership.

Renewal by Andersen Success Story:

A student in our English at Work program was involved in a car accident which caused her to miss a month of work and class. She was concerned about using all of her PTO (paid time off) during her accident. She didn't understand the short-term disability benefit. She came to me for help. I helped her call the company and, with her permission and help from an interpreter, she filed for short-term disability during her time off. This week, she came to me so excited with her paycheck. She showed me that she had been given her PTO hours back, and her short-term disability had been approved. She said, "Look what we did!"

7.2 *Describe the most pressing challenges the consortium is currently facing. Include any ideas for addressing these challenges, but note that it is acceptable to acknowledge and describe challenges even without a proposal for addressing them.*

Growth tied to funding

Growth in our GED/Diploma program increased by over 200% for the 22-23 FY. As students in the K-12 system are looking for alternative education, Adult Ed became an option for students wishing to complete their GED or Diploma. Increased enrollment of these students in the 17-21 age range has offered challenges with meeting needs including, work/job placement and readiness, county support, mental health needs, and support for college and career readiness. Pacing growth can also

be a struggle. Making sure to continue to grow programming without growing too quickly and outpacing the funding caps in place.

Space

Like many Adult Ed programs, Great Rivers struggles with a lack of space, transportation, and childcare. Addressing these challenges would open up educational opportunities for many adults in these communities.

Paid teacher PD time

Increased time for teachers to collaborate and attend professional development would only improve class rigor and outcomes. As much as PD is a priority for Great Rivers, it is difficult to fund time for teachers that are not tied to contact hour revenue since many other funding sources are used to fund other staff, rent, etc. Several teachers are trained and educated in areas that are specialized such as teaching Microsoft Office Suite or GED math skills. If there was additional

Many students have past trauma and/or are coming here as refugees. Many times home life is brought into the classroom and can distract from learning. Having more resources and/or training on how to address or help the student/s is needed in the classroom. It is difficult to know the responsibilities of staff and teachers when it comes to mental health and trauma issues in students.

Attendance and addressing barriers

Inconsistent attendance is challenging in the classroom. Often, students have children and cannot attend classes until their children are school-aged. Weather also plays a huge role in attendance. Those that do not have transportation stop coming when the temperature is too low. Others begin to work more hours at their jobs when the weather gets nice. Another barrier to attendance is conflicting programming in the Dakota County Jail while adult ed classes are in session.

Schools and Communities regarding lack of engagement and knowledge of Adult Education

Within the school districts there are easy ways to connect, and conversely, structures that are hard to engage in because of the politically hierarchical nature. In the 2

school districts within the consortium, the focus on equity and inclusion is vastly different. The focus of the School Board is very different. The diversity, integration and acceptance of change in the communities and schools are vastly different. Being part of leadership teams in one district is easy and results in collaborative work, many benefits to students, opportunities for engagement and employment while the other district is not even open to having Adult Education Staff invited to initial discussions. Solutions are as easy as having the Equity leaders in the districts work with Adult Ed programing – having EL teachers engage with students and families to share information, provide resources and more. Community Engagement is also a struggle. Great Rivers works with area Chambers of Commerce, City and County Departments, Law Enforcement, and businesses on the Workforce Boards, companies in the community who show engagement and interest – especially those who have a diverse workforce. It is difficult to work in a school district with the desire to create opportunities and access for adult learners when one school board is focused on banning books and one is very large thus identifying points of contact to serve families becomes difficult. Consistently showing up at community events such as police open houses, city days, school open houses – any events that allow for exposure to the programs is worth the time of the staff. One staff member is at the public library 1 afternoon per week. 1 staff member works from Hastings Family Service 1 day per week. Those are just some examples of finding solutions to get into the community and create a pathway to people finding out more about Adult Education.

7.3 *Explain if, when and how the consortium addresses the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion, including but not limited to racial equity. Consider the following:*

- *Does the consortium have a vision or strategy for addressing issues of equity? If so, how is this vision or strategy shared amongst staff? If not, how will one be developed?*
- *Describe any professional development focused on diversity, equity and inclusion that the consortium has sponsored and/or participated in.*

- *If the consortium is participating in diversity, equity and inclusion training or initiatives that are led by a K-12 district, how is training or initiative being made relevant for the ABE context?*

Vision and strategy for addressing issues of equity are important. This includes our overall goal to serve everyone in need and then becomes – how is this done on a case-by-case basis? SoWashCo schools is on an equity journey – and staff attend, collaborate, learn from and lean on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department. Staff are able to collaborate with mental health providers, homelessness liaisons, cultural liaisons, Community Outreach Coordinators and Principals who have a wealth of knowledge to share with the team. Every day is a new opportunity to work on troubleshooting issues of equity within our programing. This program year we have collaborated as a district to support our Ukrainian and Russian immigrants. It is difficult to find the best resources for people coming from countries involved in active war situations.

The enrollment and orientation process allows the staff to not only offer CASAS assessments, it allows for a needs assessment for the student. Great Rivers has a mission and vision of:

The mission of the Adult Basic Education program is to provide learners with a comfortable, challenging, learning and networking environment to enhance work, English language and life skills.

Our vision is to partner with learners to create opportunities where students attend regularly, set personal goals, use technology and make progress while collaborating with community and educational organizations to create pathways for success. Our program – a part of Districts 833 and 200 – also falls under the Equity Statements of both school districts.

From SoWashCo: [102.1 Racial Equity and Inclusion | individual policy](#)

From Hastings: [Equity Statement](#)

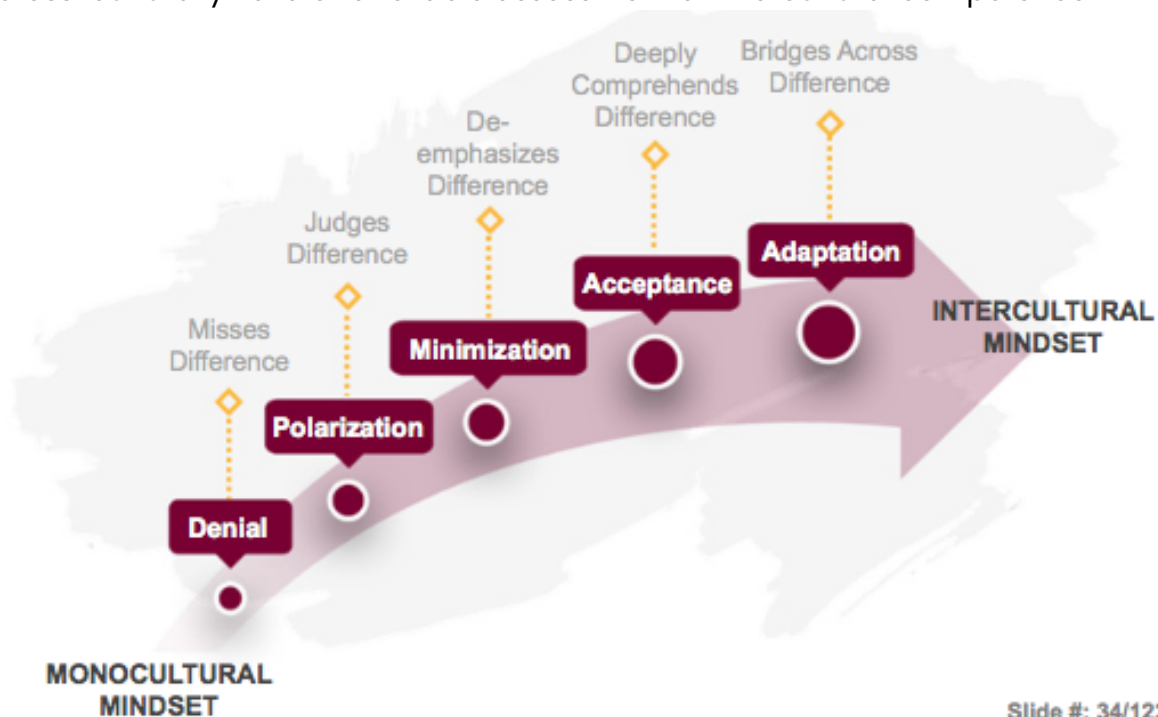
During staff meetings, the group makes time to discuss student success and ways to address any challenges. Several modes of communication are used when connecting with students, hoping we may decrease any language barriers. We use

Talking Points (texting) and *SMORE* (emails) which translates material into most students' home languages.

One of the best experiences for the staff has been taking and working with the results of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) in the spring of 2022.

The *Intercultural Development Inventory* has been psychometrically tested and found to possess strong reliability and strong content, construct, and predictive validity across diverse cultural groups. Through rigorous testing, the IDI demonstrated cross-cultural generalizability, both internationally and with domestic diversity. The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate a global, developmental grounded conversation, across diverse individuals and groups, in order to increase people's capacity to better understand culture and to develop culturally responsive and appropriate strategies for engaging cultural differences.

From the assessment tool, the IDI Group and Personal Profile is developed. It is the only report generated from one's participation in the Inventory. Individual results are NEVER shared with the staff member (unless requested per an individual debrief) The Inventory is grounded in a comprehensive, cross-culturally validated model of intercultural competence. It generates custom group and individual profile reports which provides an individualized Intercultural Development Plan (IDP). That plan applies IDI results to goal achievement through IDI Guided Development. This is a cross-culturally valid and reliable assessment of intercultural competence



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This discussion, shared journey, shared narrative and vocabulary continue to be a positive way for the staff to work on bias, misunderstanding, and both personal and professional growth. Moving forward from the staff working with a coach with their own IDI, and then the leaders meeting with the whole staff, they left the team with questions and homework to do with what we deemed appropriate.

Below is a list of past and future training the staff have participated in or will participate in. Each training is designed to enhance the cultural and racial consciousness of each staff member.

Key Achievement Points	Deliverables	Timeline
Culturally Responsive Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders develop racial and cultural consciousness and competence • Individual learning and development plans • Consortium learning and development plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDI & Cultural Competence Development, Pt. 1, February 2022 • IDI & Cultural Competence Development, Pt. 2, April 2022
Cultural Competent Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Coaches and teachers use Cultural Competence domain in self-reflection • Dr. Sharokee Hollie - <i>Culturally Responsive Teaching</i> - Keynote Speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRT & the Brain, Pt 1, Dec 2020 • CRT & the Brain Pt. 2, June 2021 <p>School year 2017-2018 3 Sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept. 2017 • Feb. 2018 • June 2018

Book Club(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Culture Map</i>- Meyer • <i>Talk It Out!</i>- Sanderson • <i>The Four Agreements</i>- Ruiz • <i>Culturally Responsive & The Brain</i>- Hammond • <i>A Good Time for the Truth</i>- Shin • <i>Courageous Conversations</i>- Singleton • <i>Blindspot</i>- Mahzarin, Banai, Greenwald 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter/Spring 2023 • Spring 2022 • Fall 2021 • SY 2020-21 • SY 2020-21 • SY 2019-20 • SY 2018-19
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