

4.1 How high-quality educational services are developed and offered by the consortium.

How are decisions made about what kinds of courses and instruction to offer?

Cass Lake-Bena-Walker ABE provides a flexible schedule, with open classroom hours Monday through Friday. Limited hours are maintained in the summer months to ensure students have access to qualified staff and quality instruction year-round. Hours are adjusted bi-annually to meet evolving student demand and needs. CLBW ABE includes small, rural communities. To offer access to ABE services throughout all the communities, classrooms have been established at various locations to limit the need for travel by the learners. These classrooms usually have low attendance and do not require full time programming, and there are periods when there is no demonstrated need for a classroom in an area.

CLBW ABE provides instruction in Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Instruction is offered for GED, Minnesota State Standard Adult Diploma, Citizenship/Civics, digital literacy skills, transition to higher education, and workforce preparation. All students complete standardized TABE assessments with diagnostic profiles to aid in developing individual learning plans aligned to specific strengths and needs. Students can use any combination of resource room style supported learning time, distance learning platforms used on-site, distance learning platforms accessed remotely, managed enrollment seminars, and subject specific tutoring sessions.

Adults in the program are assessed for their proficiency in Reading, Language, Vocabulary, Speaking, Listening, and Writing. An individual learning plan is developed for each student based on his or her standardized assessment, educational history, personal goals, and individual needs and goals.

How are courses and instruction evaluated to determine whether they are high quality?

Offering high quality instruction is important to all educators. Measuring high quality instruction is always a moving target and difficult to define. We continuously review data that is already being collected in SID. We assess the quality and success of instruction by evaluating its ability to produce measurable skill gains and student retention. We evaluate the materials and lessons for standards alignment, universal design, and inclusiveness. We survey students periodically for feedback and suggestions, especially when trying new formats.

How does the consortium ensure that all students have access to sufficient intensity of instruction to make learning gains?

Instruction is offered throughout the consortium at all 6 federally (NRS) defined ESL and ABE levels. Our consortium places students in the levels through assessment using TABE. Content and instruction at all levels is currently being aligned to the three content standards adopted by the state: College and Career Readiness Standards (to address basic skills), Northstar Digital

Literacy Standards (to address digital literacy skills), and the Academic, Career and Employability Skills (ACES)/Transitions Integration Framework (TIF).

Cass Lake-Bena-Walker ABE strives to meet the NRS level gain targets for its students. Those students who can regularly commit time at the ABE site and participate in distance learning are most likely to achieve level gains. CLBW ABE focuses on highly individualized learning plans to meet individual student needs, resulting in distinct pathways for learners to build core skills.

Distance learning, when implemented with careful assessment and support, has proven to be an important tool in helping students increase educational access. Distance learning gives students the flexibility to engage in learning activities within the constraints of their schedules. Students using distance learning platforms can spend much more time practicing skills and engaging in active learning than those who study only with instructors on-site. Access to computers and the Internet outside of a school setting continues to be inconsistent in rural Minnesota.

However, distance learning overcomes the obstacle of transportation and distance when these resources are available. Students can access instruction when they are not able to obtain transportation to classes that may be 30 or more miles away. Unlike homework or packets, the distance learning platforms offer interactive instruction, guided practice, and assessment. Instructors can monitor student progress remotely and give feedback, adjust lessons, and request on-site meetings in nearly real time.

CLBW ABE recommends students dedicate as much time as possible to their learning. A minimum of six hours per week is expected, but students are encouraged to plan for a more substantial time investment in their education and future. Encouragement to sustain that level is given through a welcoming environment, follow up phone calls, e-mails, and notes if their attendance drops off. Incentives to receive free GED Ready practice vouchers, free or reduced Official GED testing vouchers, gift cards to local business or gas cards can be earned.

How does instruction incorporate the essential components of reading instruction (phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension)?

CLBW ABE provides instruction in: phonics, phonics awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension via methods taught while participating in several Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) trainings.

Writing instruction, including spelling and handwriting is also taught. The staff attends training to support incorporating the essential components of reading instruction. Following student assessments, diagnostic summaries of strengths and weaknesses in reading and other assessed areas are completed. Based on the diagnostics, an educational plan is written, and components in the assessed areas of need are addressed in instruction. In addition, instruction in close reading, answering text dependent questions, and summarizing are important parts of reading instruction.

Staff members have attended training in the College and Career Readiness Foundations. Some staff members have also been trained in the Common Core Standards, Reading Fluency, Reading Recovery, ELA training, and Adult Career Pathways Curriculum training. Additionally, our program coordinator is licensed in reading and English As A Second Language.