

**CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**SE Southeast community college**  
**ABE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**



**GED**



**Lifetime Learning**



**English as a Second Language**



**Helping adults gain confidence through basic skills!**



# Welcome

Thank you for expressing an interest in volunteering for Adult Basic Education at Southeast Community College. Helping adults increase their literacy skills can be a very rewarding experience for both the volunteer and the student. In the beginning, there can be many questions about Adult Education. We hope this handbook can answer some of those questions. This handbook was written to give an overview of our program to prospective tutors, as well as to provide trained tutors with a reminder as to how the program works.



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## What is ABE?

Adult Basic Education is a local, state and national program to provide basic education skills at no cost to the student who is 16 years of age or older and not enrolled in school.

The program has four components:

1. **Adult Basic Education:** for those wishing to improve their skills in reading, language or math or those assessed at the eighth-grade level or lower.
2. **GED:** High school completion for those with less than a high school diploma credential.
3. **English as a Second Language:** for residents wishing to learn to speak, read and write English.
4. **Citizenship:** for those wishing to prepare to become U.S. citizens.



## History of ABE

The Adult Basic Education program began in Nebraska in 1965 following the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act by Congress. In 1966, Congress enacted the Adult Education Act as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and continued the AEA until the present. The name was officially changed to Adult Education in 2008 at the federal level. Southeast Community College continues to refer to its program as Adult Basic Education to avoid confusion with our Adult Continuing Education classes.

The origin of the GED tests started with the military in 1942 when the United States Armed Forces Institute intended to give military personnel an opportunity to demonstrate achievement comparable to that of high school graduates. The USAFI recognized that many members of the military and veterans had not had an opportunity to complete four years of high school. The GED Testing Program was founded in 1945 and was administered by the Veterans' Testing Service.

After World War II, it was recognized that this service could benefit civilians as well as military personnel. In 1963, the Veterans' Testing Service was renamed the General Educational Development Testing Service. More than 800,000 adults take the GED Tests each year.

## The GED Tests

There are five GED Tests in the series: Language Arts Writing, Language Arts Reading, Social Studies, Science, and Math.

The writing test is in two parts. Part I is a 50-question multiple-choice test in the areas of sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and informational documents. The time limit is 75 minutes for Part I. Part II is a written essay, and the student is given a topic at the time of testing. The student has 45 minutes to write the essay.

The reading test has 40 questions and covers popular literature, classical literature and commentary. The test is 65 minutes.

The social studies test is 70 minutes and is comprised of 50 questions in the areas of history, geography, economics, civics, and government.



The science test is 80 minutes and has 50 questions covering life sciences (biology) and physical sciences (earth and space science, physics and chemistry).

The math test is in two parts and covers algebra, geometry, number relations, data analysis, and statistics. Part I permits the use of a scientific calculator (provided) and has 25 questions. The student has 45 minutes to complete Part I. Part II also has 25 questions and a 45-minute time limit, but is completed with pencil and paper.

- 15 million people in the U.S. have earned GED diplomas since the program began in 1942.
- About one in seven high school diplomas issued in the U.S. each year is based on the GED Tests.
- The GED is recognized nationwide by more than 90 percent of employers and 97 percent of institutions of higher learning.

## English as a Second Language

ESL classes help adult students make improvements in speaking, reading and writing English. ESL classes provide appropriate levels of English skill based on the student's needs, abilities and interests. All programs teach survival English, conversational English, grammar, reading, listening comprehension, writing, and vocabulary.

## Becoming a Volunteer Tutor

Requirements for becoming a volunteer tutor are simple: you must be over 18, have a high school diploma or GED and a willingness to help students learn!

- Volunteer tutors can work as many hours per week or month as they would like. The program operates year-round, but volunteers can set their own schedule.
- Areas of study in which one may be tutoring include English as a Second Language, basic skills or GED preparation. However, many students need very basic skills development in reading and math. Tutors can specify an area in which they would like to tutor.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will introduce you to your student and/or class and help you get acquainted, as well as provide materials for you to use in working with students.
- The ABE program conducts in-service training for teachers and tutors at least once each year. Tutors are encouraged to attend these programs to receive current information about ABE and new resources for tutoring.



## Tutoring Goals and Objectives

1. Establish rapport with the students, treating them as adults and equals.
2. Become familiar with the students' interests and goals, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Help your students set educational goals and outline steps to achieving their goals.
3. Provide the students with positive feedback. Allow your students to have success right away.
4. Help the students assume responsibility for attending tutoring or contacting you if they are not going to attend the session. Exchange telephone numbers with your students so you may notify each other if something occurs that will prevent you from meeting.
5. Follow up with a phone call, e-mail or letter when the students do not attend tutoring.

## Record Keeping

Record sheets are provided to volunteers to keep track of time spent volunteering for the ABE program. This information must be provided to the ABE Office at the end of each month.

Accurate record keeping of volunteer hours is essential for the ABE program to continue to receive grant funding from the state and federal governments to operate our program.

## General Tutoring Tips

- **Give simple directions.** Explanations and directions must be clearly given. Do not talk above the student's head. However, do not talk down to the student, either. Do not tell students, "This is easy," or they will feel defeated if they fail the task.
- **Do not make an issue of an error.** It is more constructive to correct an error casually. Tell the rule, instead of asking. If it is appropriate, teach and reteach the point, but do not make an issue of the error.
- **Avoid criticism.** Criticism may destroy self-confidence and interest in learning. Needless to say, do not ridicule students. Let them know you expect them to do well.



- **Be positive.** Build on the student's strengths and interests. The student who likes to cook will learn to read recipes, though he/she may resist formal reading instructions. Keep the lessons moving. When you notice the student losing interest, change activities.

- **Maintain confidentiality.** In many cases, it has taken courage for the student to seek our help. Information or the name of the student is not to be discussed outside of the program.
- **Offer alternatives.** Be careful about presenting choices. If you ask, "Do you want to...?" the answer may be "No!" If you ask, "What do you want to do?" the answer may be a suggestion completely unacceptable. It is better to offer alternatives: "Shall we read the newspaper or magazine today?" Be certain that each of the choices is one available to the student. For example, he/she may choose to read one of two books on the shelf, both within his/her reading level.
- **Avoid counseling students.** As a volunteer, take time to listen, but do not attempt to counsel a student on personal problems such as marital, money, etc. Students in an ABE program quite often have many outside pressures. If the student appears desperate, help can be given by referral to designated professionals in the community.
- **Personal space.** Sit down with students; don't stand over them. Be aware of any space barriers they have set. Sit beside your student or around the corner of a table. Work together.
- **Develop trust.** It is necessary to develop a good rapport with students.
  - a. Be yourself.
  - b. Make them feel at ease.
  - c. Be honest with the students. If you don't know, say so, but tell students you'll find out (and then do).
  - d. Be generous with your praise.

## Student Retention

Retention is an important factor if the ABE program is to be successful. Often when students enroll, they do not realize the work and effort it will require to meet their goals. As reality sets in and they encounter family, social or health problems, many students might not attend well at first. This is where you, the volunteer, play an important role. The student needs to feel a sense of belonging and achievement. By letting the students know you missed them when they were absent and reassuring them they are making progress, the students' self-esteem will improve and so will their confidence in their ability to learn.

If you aren't meeting the students' needs and working toward accomplishing their goals, they will not stay. Be sure they are progressing and not given "busy" work.

# Volunteers are the KEY to our success!!

Volunteers allow us to provide individual attention to students. Tutors significantly increase students' learning, advancement and educational success. We need volunteer tutors because there are not enough teachers nor enough money to pay for all the services needed to help people with their educational goals. Two hours a week can help someone learn to read or get his/her GED diploma.

The Volunteer Coordinator for the ABE program arranges for tutors to work with students who need one-on-one help and recruits volunteers to help in our various classrooms. The Coordinator is responsible for the recruitment, orientation and placement of volunteers based on needs in the program.

The Volunteer Coordinator is available to handle any questions, suggestions, concerns or requests that volunteers bring forward. Volunteers also may be assigned to work in a class situation with an instructor, who then becomes the direct supervisor. In any case, the Coordinator should be informed.



## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Nebraska Adult Basic Education program is to provide for the fulfillment of the literacy needs in the state by providing educational opportunities for adults to improve their literacy skills to a level requisite for effective citizenship and productive employment.

### **To Achieve Adult Education's Mission, our Nebraska Program Goals Are:**

1. Assist adults to become literate and attain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
2. Assist adults in completing a high school equivalency program;
3. Assist adults needing improvement in speaking, reading or writing the English language;
4. Assist adults to become citizens and/or become contributing members of their respective communities and the state;
5. Assist adults who are parents to attain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children;
6. Evaluate local programs and projects by utilizing the Adult Education Core Performance Measures and the Nebraska Indicators of Program Quality; and
7. Provide methods of administration necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998.

## **Mission Statement of the Volunteer Coordination Program**

To assist in the fulfillment of adult literacy needs in the state by providing for the recruitment, training, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers working in the Adult Basic Education program.