

**STANDARD ADULT HIGH SCHOOL  
DIPLOMA TASK FORCE**

**Report of the  
Standard Adult High School Diploma Task Force  
Minnesota Department of Education  
February 1, 2014**

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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction .....	3
Charge to the Task Force .....	3
Task Force Membership and Activities .....	3
The Task Force recommendations .....	5
Appendix A: Statutory Language Establishing Task Force and Charge .....	8
Appendix B: Standard Adult High School Diploma Advisory Task Force Membership .....	10

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# **Executive Summary**

## **Introduction**

Secondary credentials are important to an adult's success in postsecondary education, training and careers. It becomes the gateway for entry into the workforce, to postsecondary education and becoming an active and contributing member in the community. Adults should have access to an adult diploma program that has sufficient rigor and is tailored to an adult's learning needs as a worker, parent and community member. This diploma should have competencies adapted for adult students and their needs and should include academic, career development and employability skills.

Minnesota currently has an Adult Basic Education (ABE) system for providing programming to individuals who are no longer participating in K-12 instruction. This system is funded and governed federally by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, called the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Minnesota's ABE system has been recognized by other states and national organizations for the quality of services provided in the areas of core literacy skills, academic and employment readiness skills, and technology skills.

## **Charge to the Task Force**

The duties of the task force were to review "Minnesota Adult Secondary Credential: a Student Strategy for Workforce Readiness and Individual Prosperity," a report submitted in 2012 by the Minnesota Adult Secondary Task Force [convened by Literacy Action Network], and other relevant materials; and then to develop specific criteria to be used in awarding the new adult diploma.

## **Task Force Membership and Activities**

The task force consisted of nine members as designated in statute (see appendix B) . The commissioner of education was to appoint representatives from the specific organizations to the task force by July 1, 2013:

- (1) One employee of the Department of Education with expertise in adult basic education;
- (2) Five administrators and teachers with expertise in development of education curriculum from local adult basic education programs located in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the state, at least one of whom represents the Literacy Action Network;
- (3) One employee of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities with expertise in Adult Basic Education;
- (4) One employee of the Department of Employment and Economic Development with expertise in Adult Basic Education and employment; and
- (5) One member of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce familiar with Adult Basic Education programs under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.52.

The task force was not appointed and did not meet until August because of the need to go through the open appointments process. This required the development of an application with

the Secretary of State's office and meeting the required timelines to allow people to be notified and apply. The application deadline was August 2, 2013 well after the statutory requirement.

The Task Force held seven meetings between August 23, 2013 and January 24, 2014. At its final meeting the recommendations included with this report were finalized and adopted unanimously.

The Task Force reviewed existing adult diploma programs and models for delivery from other states. In addition to this research, they reviewed national standards and competency domains relevant to adult learners.

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## **The Task Force Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1: Statute Change rather than Rulemaking**

Due to the cost and time intensive nature of the rulemaking process, developing a statute would enable programming to begin sooner and allow programs to respond more quickly to the needs of adults without a secondary credential.

### **Recommendation 2: MDE Approval**

The Minnesota Department of Education should develop a process for application approval and set requirements, including program requirements to assure effective instruction for adult learners. The commissioner should create criteria based on quality, scope, and reasonableness to use when evaluating applications from ABE consortia. Competencies covered in the adult diploma program model should be rigorous and be consistent throughout the state.

### **Recommendation 3: Adult Basic Education (ABE) Consortia to Establish Programs for MDE Approval**

ABE consortia should develop a standard Adult Diploma Program as part of their comprehensive ABE program services and submit an application to the Minnesota Department of Education.

### **Recommendation 4: Program requirements**

Authority to operate an Adult Diploma Program should be contingent upon successful completion of application and operational requirements established by the commissioner and as identified in policy and ABE grant assurances. ABE consortia should resubmit their Adult Diploma Program applications as part of their consortium's five-year narrative application. The state may limit the number and size of Adult Diploma Programs within a consortium to be consistent with community need, program size, and funding.

### **Recommendation 5: Individual Advising**

Prior to admission to a Standard Adult Diploma Program each candidate must participate in an initial orientation and advising session to identify learning goals, assess the student skills and experience to determine what competencies may already be completed, identify potential career pathway(s) and identify instructional needs using career and postsecondary preparation assessments. From this information, an individualized learning plan must be developed based on the student's identified goals and skills.

On-going advising and monitoring should be provided to implement the individualized learning plan, track progress toward diploma goals and provide additional support services as needed. The final advising session must evaluate the student's work to ensure completion of necessary competencies and requirements.

### **Recommendation 6: Common Competencies**

Competencies, skills and knowledge requirements shall be established in the following areas:

- Language arts, which includes reading, writing, speaking and listening;
- Mathematics;

- Career development and employability skills; and
- Other areas, like social studies and science, as identified in the individual student's learning plan based on specific educational and career goals.

### **Recommendation 7: Demonstrating completion of requirements**

The Commissioner should allow adult diploma students to demonstrate completion of the requirements in a variety of ways and at a minimum allow:

- Prior experienced-based competency verification through K-12, postsecondary, ABE and other approved experience;
- Test-verified knowledge in an approved standardized assessment for high schools, secondary credentials, ABE programs and/or postsecondary entrance exams;
- ABE instruction and course completion; and
- Applied learning through contextualized projects and other approved methods.

The individual's career pathway plan should be considered when demonstrating competency of the requirements.

### **Recommendation 8: Portability**

The adult diploma program should allow adult diploma students who move to a new ABE program the opportunity to continue their studies and not have to start over or repeatedly demonstrate progress on the same competencies.

### **Recommendation 9: Transferability (Student Records)**

The department should establish a format for maintaining and transferring the adult student's record.

An ABE consortium that receives approval should be required to maintain a permanent individual student record that is consistent with requirements established by the commissioner. The ABE consortium must provide transcripts to other ABE consortia, an employer or a postsecondary institution upon request by the student.

### **Recommendation 11: Diploma Granting**

The commissioner of education should have the authority to issue a Minnesota Adult Diploma and transcript for any individual who has satisfied the requirements. In addition, an ABE Consortia with an approved and operating standard adult high school diploma program may work with a participating local school district to issue a standard district diploma to any individual who has satisfied the adult diploma requirements.

### **Recommendation 11: Advisory Committee**

The commissioner should establish an advisory committee of state and local ABE practitioners and leaders to provide guidance on adult diploma policies, review local programs and program applications, and help develop accountability measures to ensure high quality standards and implementation on an ongoing basis.

**Recommendation 12: Department Assistance**

The department should provide technical assistance to ABE consortia in developing and evaluating Adult Diploma Programming.

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## Appendix A: Statutory Language Establishing Task Force and Charge

2013 Session -- Chapter 116 Article 2: Sec. 18

### STANDARD ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA ADVISORY TASK FORCE.

**Subdivision 1. Establishment.** The commissioner of education shall appoint a nine-member advisory task force to recommend programmatic requirements for adult basic education programs of instruction leading to a standard adult high school diploma under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.52, subdivision 8.

**Subd. 2. Membership.** The commissioner of education must appoint representatives from the following organizations to the task force by July 1, 2013:

- (1) one employee of the Department of Education with expertise in adult basic education;
- (2) five administrators and teachers with expertise in development of education curriculum from local adult basic education programs located in rural, suburban, and urban areas of the state, at least one of whom represents the Literacy Action network;
- (3) one employee of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities with expertise in adult basic education;
- (4) one employee of the Department of Employment and Economic Development with expertise in adult basic education and employment; and
- (5) one member of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce familiar with adult basic education programs under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.52.

**Subd. 3. Duties.** The duties of the task force shall include:

- (1) reviewing "Minnesota Adult Secondary Credential: a Student Strategy for Workforce Readiness and Individual Prosperity," a report submitted in 2012 by the Minnesota Adult Secondary Task Force, and other relevant materials; and
- (2) developing specific criteria to be used in awarding the new adult diploma.

**Subd. 4. First meeting.** The commissioner of education must convene the first meeting of the task force by August 1, 2013.

**Subd. 5. Chair.** The commissioner shall appoint a chair.

**Subd. 6. Assistance.** The commissioner, upon request, must provide technical assistance to task force members.

**Subd. 7. Report.** By February 1, 2014, the task force must submit its recommendations to the commissioner of education for providing a standard adult high school diploma to persons who are not eligible for kindergarten through grade 12 services, who do not have a high school diploma, and who successfully complete an approved adult basic education program of instruction necessary to earn an adult high school diploma. The commissioner must consider these recommendations when adopting rules under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.52, subdivision 8.

**Subd. 8. Sunset.** The task force sunsets the day after submitting its report under subdivision 7, or February 2, 2014, whichever is earlier.

**EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective the day following final enactment.

**Sec. 17. Minnesota Statutes 2012, section 124D.52, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:**

**Subd. 8. Standard high school diploma for adults.** (a) The commissioner shall adopt rules for providing a standard adult high school diploma to persons who:

- (1) are not eligible for kindergarten through grade 12 services;
- (2) do not have a high school diploma; and
- (3) successfully complete an adult basic education program of instruction approved by the commissioner of education necessary to earn an adult high school diploma.

(b) Persons participating in an approved adult basic education program of instruction must demonstrate the competencies, knowledge, and skills sufficient to ensure that postsecondary programs and institutions and potential employers regard persons with a standard high school diploma and persons with a standard adult high school diploma as equally well prepared and qualified graduates. Approved adult basic education programs of instruction under this subdivision must issue a standard adult high school diploma to persons who successfully demonstrate the competencies, knowledge, and skills required by the program.

**EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective July 1, 2014.

## **Appendix B: Standard Adult High School Diploma Advisory Task Force Membership**

### **Chair**

**Karen Wolters**, Transitions Coordinator  
Mankato Area Adult Basic Education

### **Members**

**Jim Colwell**, State GED Administrator  
Minnesota Department of Education

**Karen Hynick**, System Director of P20 and College Readiness  
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

**Kristine Kelly**, ABE Teacher/Trainer  
Robbinsdale

**Judy Mortrude**, State Program Administrator  
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

**Kate Ronald**, Director Volunteers of America Adult High School  
VOA Education Center  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

**Tamra Sieve**, Metro South Adult Basic Education Director and Principal of Metro South ALP High School; Metro South Adult Basic Education, Bloomington Schools

**Amy Walstien**, Director, Education Policy  
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

### **Minnesota Department of Education Staff**

**Rose Hermodson** , Assistant to the Commissioner

**Todd Wagner**, Adult Basic Education Director

**Brad Hasskamp**, Adult Basic Education Policy and Operations Specialist

Materials from this Task Force may be found at the following [MDE website link](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Welcome/AdvBCT/StandultHighSchDipITaskForce/index.html)  
([http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Welcome/AdvBCT/StandultHighSchDipITaskForce/index.htm](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Welcome/AdvBCT/StandultHighSchDipITaskForce/index.html)  
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