



# Mindquest Matters

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A Mindquest Academy Newsletter

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## Our MQA Trainers

This year Mindquest Academy has the privilege of having five trained teachers work in the pilot project as trainers. Trainers assist Greta and Bella in training activities and also mentor first and second year teachers as they move through their training and instruction in online education. All five teachers began the Mindquest Academy pilot during its first year. Profiles of the five trainers follow:

### Melissa Chaffee

Melissa got her start with Mindquest Academy at the Hubbs Center in Saint Paul. She has remained in our Mindquest Academy Project after transfer last year to Arlington High School in Saint Paul, where she is continuing to use Mindquest Academy courses with the seniors.

In her years at the Hubbs Center Melissa enrolled a record number of diploma students in several MQA courses which she taught. She found the learners to be very engaged in the courses because they liked the curriculum and they received diploma credit, usually with some supplemental activities.

### Paula Freiermuth

Paula teaches in Osseo Adult and Family Learning in three positions: basic skills, writing, and college preparation using

Mindquest Academy with GED and diploma students. She is also the ABE Lead Teacher in the evenings, teaching GED and doing student intake.

Paula is teaching both the lab and remote models. Remote is used for diploma students, doing mostly the sampler courses. In the lab model, she teaches the Effective Writing, Effective Reading, Academic Skills, and Writing Process courses. Paula says the lab model has been great for helping students learn how to use multiple tools for learning. "As a teacher, I've found that online learning allows me to respond to students with more depth. I have been able to provide learners with access to more resources. We've had some very nice success stories where students move on from our GED classes to the College Prep class at North Hennepin where they continue with Mindquest Academy courses to improve their skills for college.

The Mindquest training has given me many more resources in my teaching, in particular the trainings dealing with cognitive apprenticeship and rubrics."

### Rita Koon

Rita has been teaching in Saint Paul ABE since 1986, and has been at the Hubbs Center since it opened in 1994. She is the team leader for the Adult Secondary

Education department and teaches college preparation class and a language arts class for non native speakers.

Rita says, "While I entered the world of online learning with more than a little trepidation, I became more and more a fan of this type of education. I have concentrated mostly on the college success courses. While online learning is not for every student, it surely fills the need for the population that is somewhat comfortable with technology, enjoys independent study, and appreciates the flexibility of this instructional method."

Rita continues, "I continue to learn and grow as I spend more time with each new course and each new learner. Since the state's initiative next year involves transition to post secondary, Mindquest Academy will continue to be a valuable alternative in adult education. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this exciting venture."

Tammy Twiggs

Tammy's foray into Mindquest Academy the first year of the pilot was teaching the Literature course to a group of twenty students in a lab class at the Hubbs Center. The experience proved both fulfilling and challenging. It was fulfilling because her students found the course loaded with content and readings that were of high interest and relevance to their lives. Many readings drew on multicultural themes, which led to in-class discussion and online writing. One of the challenges in teaching the course to a large group is managing the different paces that students naturally move in.

Tammy states, "You really have to move quickly to keep up with the learners if your class is large. Utilizing those learners who have good technology skills to help those who don't is a good strategy for a mixed ability classroom."

In the last two years Tammy has taught both the remote and the hybrid model. She prefers the hybrid model, since it combines direct instruction with some learner independence. She feels that having the experience teaching all of the models has been a real plus.

Karen Wolters

Karen supervises the Diploma Completion Program through Mankato ABE and is an instructor in the College Prep Program at South Central College. Karen says, "Learning to teach online through the Mindquest Academy Pilot Project has been one of the most rewarding things I've done in a long time. I thoroughly enjoy working with the adults in the College Prep Program, and I strongly believe in the Mindquest Academy curriculum. I have made very strong connections with other ABE teachers across the state and I wish the pilot could continue in some fashion."

### **Collaboration Brings Results!**

In 2005, Mindquest Academy staff initiated a collaborative effort involving Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), state ABE, and MLC. An Advisory Group was formed consisting of Linda Lade, Paul Wasco, and

Pradeep Kotamragu, MnSCU; Todd Wagner, state ABE; Eric Nesheim, MLC; and Greta Ploetz and Mary Diedrich, Mindquest Academy. Discussions among this group led to the development of the “transitional classroom,” or, as it’s now called, the College Prep program. Two college sites are currently serving students: North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park and South Central College in Mankato.

In this program, trained ABE teachers teach Mindquest Academy courses using both hybrid and remote models. In this issue of *Mindquest Matters*, we feature the program at South Central College.

**South Central College  
Prep Program  
By Karen Wolters**

The College Prep Program at South Central College (SCC) is designed to help transition learners from ABE to college.

The program is housed at SCC and employs two ABE instructors who each work 15 hours per week. There are 17 students currently enrolled.

A Perkins grant provides “seed” money for the first year. After that, student hours will be reimbursed through ABE funding. SCC provides in-kind contributions of space, computers, marketing and other benefits, including planning and support from staff.

Upon entry students complete a 3-5 hour assessment process which enables the instructors to learn more about their academic skills. These assessments include the Accuplacer (college placement test), the Learning and Study Skills Inventory (LASSI), and the TABE. Strengths are highlighted, and areas of need are addressed through the Mindquest Academy online curriculum.

Learners are asked to commit nine hours a week to their study with the program. This simulates the time they would put into a 3-credit course: 3 hours of classroom and 6 hours of study time. Two eight-week terms in the College Prep program are equivalent to a semester’s work at the college.

Six courses are currently offered: Study Reading, Psychology, Reading Strategies, Managing College Success, Literature, and Writing for ELL

Learners have the option of attending ‘lab classes’ for as many hours as they feel necessary, where they have access to their College Prep instructors and can get a feel for the study environment at SCC. Some students work remotely.

With the exception of one student who is completely remote, all others are meeting with their instructor 1:1 for a minimum of one hour per week. During this meeting, they review their progress and discuss what they have learned, get questions answered about their coursework, and/or work on things such as college application forms, scheduling appointments with financial aide advisors, discussing

programs offered at SCC or planning what else they need to do to be ready for college (changes in family, work commitments, etc.),

I find myself doing a LOT of counseling-type activities: getting them connected with financial and academic advisors and working with them to believe in themselves.

I'm finding that the adult students have very little knowledge about college and college expectations, e.g., a 3 credit course requiring two hours of study time for each hour in the classroom. Their computer skills range from no computer knowledge to very competent computer users.

A pleasant surprise that I'm observing is the motivation that these learners exhibit about going to college. Once they get through orientation, they are highly motivated to work on the courses or modules. I have some students who state that they are willing to take college prep classes for 1-2 years if that is what it takes for them to be prepared for college. This is a change from the GED and diploma students who come into ABE in a big rush to get done as fast as possible so they can 'get on with their lives.' The motivation and follow through so far has been such a breath of fresh air. It can become overwhelming when you open up First Class and there are 15 to 20 assignments waiting for your response!! You have to stay on top of the paperwork and the responses to keep the ball in motion for all of the learners. There's nothing more discouraging to

them than waiting too long for an instructor's response.

### **Changing the Goal from High School Equivalency to College Readiness**

Steve Reder (Portland State University) did a comprehensive research review (see *Adult Literacy and Postsecondary Education Students: Overlapping Populations and Learning Trajectories* on the NCSALL website [www.ncsall.net](http://www.ncsall.net)).

Reder found significant overlap between students in adult literacy programs and those in remedial education classes at postsecondary institutions. He summarizes the main points and policy implications from that review:

Advance the goal of adult education from high school equivalency to college readiness.

- Policy makers should add support for GED-to-postsecondary transition to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) legislation.
- Adult education and postsecondary education teachers and administrators should become more familiar with each other's programs.
- Adult educators and postsecondary educators should work together to build the literacy skills of their students.