

The Learning Connection

YOUR IMPACT REPORT | FALL 2026

Literacy Network Launches State-Approved High School Completion Program

Literacy Network is launching a state-approved competency-based high school equivalency diploma (HSED) program that students may complete in English or Spanish.

People who have not finished high school have several options for earning a Wisconsin high school credential:

- Earn a GED: Pass four timed, computer-based exams and a civics test.
- Earn an HSED: Pass the GED exams plus requirements in civics, health, and employability/career skills.
- Earn a 5.09 HSED: Complete projects and assignments that satisfy high school competencies. This option allows students to demonstrate knowledge instead of completing timed tests, which can be a barrier.

Previously, students could work one-on-one with an instructor in our Omega School program to prepare for GED tests or work with a Literacy Network tutor in Madison College 5.09 classes. We are now adding a third option: our own in-house 5.09 program approved by the Department of Public Instruction this summer. **Unique from other programs in the state, our 5.09 curriculum provides students with personalized, one-on-one instruction; self-paced and flexible timing; and the option to earn their diploma in English or Spanish.**

Adults who want to earn a diploma often face challenges, including family and work responsibilities or learning differences. Personalized instruction helps overcome these barriers. **Literacy Network staff will help students choose a path to completion and make a learning plan that meets their needs.**



Teresa, one of 34 graduates who worked with an instructor at our Omega learning center this year.



Agbeko (R), with program manager Marie Knibbe, earned his HSED with the support of a Literacy Network tutor.

Student choice is built into our 5.09 curriculum, from selecting the novel they read to choosing among written and video modalities. Students must complete all assignments with a score of at least 80%, including proctored assessments in all subject areas. With the 5.09, students may demonstrate competency solely by completing our curriculum, or through a combination of GED tests, prior high school credits, and our curriculum.

A high school equivalency diploma provides a strong foundation for meaningful careers, continued education, and economic mobility. **With our new high school completion program, more students will overcome barriers, graduate, and be able to take the next step to achieve their dreams! ■**

Median hourly wage for a Wisconsinite*



\$15 WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

\$21.42 WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

*Data from Working Wisconsin



70%

OF JOBS NATIONWIDE REQUIRE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR FURTHER EDUCATION*

*Data from The Bureau of Labor Statistics

"I cannot wait to see the learning opportunities that this will bring to the Madison area."

– Jake Gorges, Executive Director of Wisconsin Literacy

Gabriela's Goal: Building English to Return to Dentistry

Gabriela is building her English and making progress toward her goal of resuming her career as a dentist! She practiced dentistry in Brazil and has been working as a dental assistant in Madison. This spring, Gabriela got a new job, with a significant salary increase and benefits, where she uses English regularly. Because of her hard work in our programs, Gabriela's English is now strong enough that she has also co-enrolled at Madison College to earn her Expanded Functions Dental Assistant certificate. She is continuing her studies at Literacy Network to work toward her dream of being a dentist once again! Meet Gabriela and her tutor, Courtney, below.



Gabriela uses English regularly in her current role as a dental assistant.

GABRIELA

Why do you like your classes and teachers?

They helped me with my challenges by supporting and teaching me and with each of my victories they cheer with me.

How have your classes helped you achieve your goals? Through the classes, **I was able to open my ears and understand what people and patients were saying to me.** I learned both grammar and everyday spoken English, whether in a doctor's appointment or at the market, and this helped me a lot to feel free and not afraid to do everything on my own without having to ask a translator for help or ask if someone spoke another language so I could communicate.

Describe your experience working with your tutor: Courtney is amazing, and I'm very grateful to have her as my tutor. She supports me through every challenge, and I feel like she's part of the family, someone I can trust and share all my difficulties with. She's always cheerful and positive, helping and encouraging me to keep going and overcome the language barriers. I love her.

COURTNEY

What do you like about tutoring with Literacy Network and working with Gabriela?

Literacy Network really sets tutors up for success with the support provided by each class's intern, who prepares engaging lesson plans based on tutor feedback. Each week, I'm so impressed with the curiosity and diligence that Gabriela brings. She asks such thoughtful questions from grammar down to the particular mechanics of pronouncing a certain sound pattern, and I know that she applies and tries out the pieces we work on each week in her day-to-day life and at work. Gabriela and I are also able to keep things lighthearted and have a lot of fun in the process of learning and practicing English!

What are you most proud of from your work with Gabriela?

First, Gabriela and I spent several sessions during one semester reviewing car and traffic-related vocabulary to help her prepare for her driving test. I certainly took for granted the number of new (and odd!) vocabulary terms that come with driving on the road and interacting with a car, so we worked hard to reinforce new words and review what kinds of phrases could come up in conversation with the DMV instructor. **Gabriela ended up passing her test and getting her license! Second, I'm proud of the confidence Gabriela has gained and realized in her English over the years.** She recently has switched jobs where the patients are primarily English speaking, and she's been fully capable of speaking with them and taking down notes in English.

Do you have a favorite memory of your time with Gabriela? When I think about my time with Gabriela, my favorite parts are all of the times we've laughed together! ■

About one in three students enrolled at Literacy Network want to advance their skills so they can reach workplace goals. Like Gabriela, they want to improve on-the-job communication, earn a promotion, get a better-paying job, or start a new career path.

GROWING THROUGH *Literacy* — LUNCH

Tuesday, September 29, 2026
12:00 – 1:00 PM

The Madison Concourse Hotel
1 W Dayton St • Madison, WI

Celebrate Hope, Opportunity, and Community at 2026's Growing Through Literacy

Join us to celebrate the determination of our students, the generosity of our community, and our collective hope that transforms lives. Hear stories of students building skills to achieve their dreams of high school completion, better jobs, improved communication, citizenship, and more.



"I knew nothing about English but right now I can speak, I can write, I can understand. All my English is from Literacy Network."
– Marlon, ESL student

Attendance for this fundraising event is free of charge and includes lunch. All are welcome!

Register at www.litnetwork.org/GTL26 or by scanning this QR code.



**DON'T MISS EXCITING
UPDATES ABOUT OUR
NEW HIGH SCHOOL
COMPLETION PROGRAM!**

Questions? Interested in being an event sponsor? Contact margaret@litnetwork.org or call 608-268-6578. **Registration closes September 25 at 12:00 pm.**

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS!





MISSION:

*Literacy Network
helps adults in Dane
County build skills,
reach goals, and
connect communities.*

Introducing Our New Essential Literacy Program Manager, Jamie Kobs!



We are pleased to welcome Jamie Kobs as our new Essential Literacy Program Manager! In this role, Jamie will help native English speakers and advanced English Language Learners build reading, writing, computer, and math skills. Her role will include lesson planning, student intake and placement, and tutor training and support.

Jamie first got to know Literacy Network by volunteering as a committee member and a tutor. She shares, "I am thrilled to be joining this team full-time! **I look forward to working directly with students, interns, and tutors and contributing to the meaningful work Literacy Network does to strengthen our community.**"

Prior to joining Literacy Network, Jamie managed the statewide tutor training and digital literacy programs at Wisconsin Literacy for four years and was a high school English, French, and reading teacher for 15 years before that.

Outside of work, Jamie volunteers as an election official in her community. She enjoys gardening, cooking, and supporting her two sons at cross country meets and ultimate frisbee games. ■

About Essential Literacy

All Essential Literacy students set goals related to literacy, digital skills, employment, and education during a one-on-one intake interview. Staff use this information to tailor instruction to students' goals, their skill level, and their preferred learning style. Students meet weekly with a volunteer personal tutor in a group setting of up to eight tutoring pairs facilitated by an intern. Students in Essential Literacy frequently share that past school experiences have left them feeling uncomfortable in a traditional classroom setting; one-on-one tutoring provides a supportive environment for them to build both confidence and skills. **In the past year, 95% of Essential Literacy program participants have achieved skills relevant to their personal goals.**