Study Circle Guide:

Research-based Adult Reading Instruction

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NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

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CONTENTS

ABOUT STUDY CIRCLES

Who created this study circle?

This study circle was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The study circle is part of NCSALL's efforts to help connect research and practice in the field of adult basic education and adult literacy. The Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle is one of a series of study circles that NCSALL has developed.

Why was this study circle created?

The purpose of all the study circles is to help staff developers and practitioners organize and conduct professional development that helps practitioners read, discuss, and use research to improve their practice.

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research (both university-based and practitioner research). We want to ensure that practitioners—teachers, counselors, program administrators, and others—have an opportunity to access, understand, judge, and use research in their work. Therefore, the goal of the NCSALL study circles is to help adult basic education practitioners, in a small group setting, learn about research findings, theories, and concepts from NCSALL's research and discuss how these can be applied to practice and policy in adult education.

When we have talked to practitioners in the field of adult literacy about research, they ask for techniques, strategies, and practical suggestions that they can use immediately. Yet, research often produces reports, articles, and other documents that provide primarily theories, concepts, ideas, and sometimes implications for practice. NCSALL feels that there should be a process that "translates" research findings into practical suggestions and that practitioners should be involved in that process. The prime vehicles for translating research into practical suggestions for practitioners are professional development activities such as practitioner research training and study circles, where practitioners

can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:

Research produces:
Theories, concepts, and ideas in
- Articles
- Reports
- Presentations

Practitioners need:
Techniques, strategies, and suggestions in
- Articles
- Workshops
- Web sites

Translation through:
Practitioner Research and Study Circles which produce practical recommendations for instruction and policy
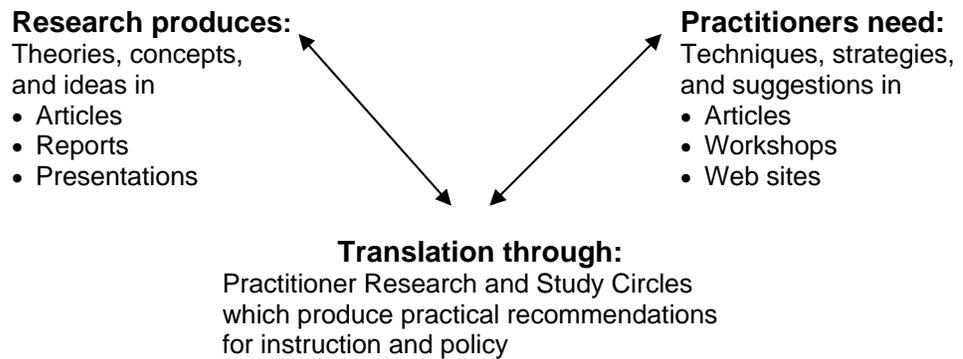
What are study circles?

Study circles are professional development activities for practitioners (teachers, tutors, counselors, support staff, and program administrators) in programs that provide adult students with adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education services. Each study circle uses a similar format, depicted in the chart below:

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Participants will:	**Participants will:**	**Participants will:**
▪ Learn what a study circle is and is not	▪ Discuss the research they have read	▪ Discuss strategies they can use
▪ Think about their own experience related to the topic	▪ Judge relevance of research to their own work	▪ Make an individual plan to try out strategies
▪ Discuss the research they have read	▪ Discuss strategies that they can use in their class or program	▪ Discuss supports and barriers to change
		▪ Make a group plan for next steps

What should the outcomes of this study circle be?

First and foremost, we hope that practitioners learn more about what the research says about reading instruction and come away with ideas and an individual plan of action for how to apply what they've learned in their own classrooms and programs.

Secondly, we hope that the group is able to create a plan for the further work or contribution of the group itself. The group might decide in the last session to have a follow-up meeting, to stay in touch and share ideas via e-mail, or to produce a summary of what they've learned—something practical—that can be shared with other practitioners or policymakers, such as:

- A list of strategies or practical suggestions that follow from the research findings and that can be shared with other practitioners in the state or program

- A list of policy changes at the program or state level that follow the research findings

If each individual participant leaves the group with a plan of action for him/herself, and the group leaves with a plan for its further development or the development of others, the study circle is a success.

Who should participate?

The study circles are designed for any practitioners who work in adult basic education programs: teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, and others. Most of the study circles deal with topics that are broad enough to be of interest to ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners in a variety of delivery settings: community-based organizations, local educational authorities, libraries, correctional facilities, etc. The design of the study circle and the readings should be appropriate for both new and experienced practitioners; however, some of the readings have acronyms that may need to be reviewed with participants.

The study circles are designed for approximately 8 to 12 participants. We don't recommend running a study circle with

fewer than 5 or more than 15 people, as discussions are harder to facilitate with too few or too many participants.

How long is the study circle?

This study circle is designed for 10½ hours, divided into three sessions of 3½ hours each. We recommend that the sessions be scheduled no more than two weeks apart; if they are scheduled once a month, participants tend to lose the thread of the discussion and forget what they have read. If they are only one week apart, participants may not be provided with enough time to complete the readings between sessions.

If participants want follow-up meetings after the last session, they can set those up during the last session.

How do I recruit participants?

NCSALL has produced a sample flyer that provides information about this NCSALL study circle, which you can find on page 7. The flyer presents an overview of the topic and a brief description about what will be covered in each of the sessions. It also includes a registration form for practitioners to mail back to you.

You are welcome to use the flyer to send out via mail or on a Web site to let practitioners know when and where the study circle will be taking place. Or, you can create your own flyer, using the NCSALL flyer as an example.

How do I select dates for the study circle?

Select all three dates for the three sessions at the very beginning and advertise them in the recruitment flyer. Only people who can make all three dates will, in all likelihood, sign up to attend the study circle.

In general, it is best to have the three dates regularized (e.g., all on Tuesday nights or all on Friday mornings), as someone who is free at a certain time of week is more likely to have that same time free every week.

How do I organize the first session?

When you feel that you have solid commitments from the number of participants you are seeking, contact them to confirm their participation in the study circle. At this time, reconfirm the times, dates, and location of the study circle with the participants.

As mentioned above, the study circles have been designed for a group of practitioners to meet over three sessions, with each session lasting 3½ hours. Because three sessions' worth of time is such a limited period for a group to meet, we suggest that several short readings and a brief cover letter with information about the study circle be sent to practitioners to read before the first meeting.

After confirming their participation, send each participant the packet of information and materials to read before the first meeting (Pre-Meeting Packet of readings and handouts on pages 21–50). Participants need to receive this packet at least 10 days before the first meeting of the study circle.

You, as the facilitator, will also want to read over the packet so that you are ready for the first session and for questions that participants may have.

Be sure that you arrive early for each session in order to set up the chairs in a circle; arrange your newsprint(s); and organize handouts, pens, tape, etc. It's nice to have some sort of refreshment, such as juice, coffee, or water. Check out where the restrooms are so you can tell participants where they are located, and make sure the heating or cooling in the room is appropriate.

Always bring at least two or three extra copies of the readings for participants who forget to bring their own. You may also want to have (or start compiling during the meeting) a list of participants and their telephone numbers or e-mail addresses so participants can contact one another during the course of the study circle.

What kind of support can I expect?

For advice on facilitating a study circle, please review the "Tips for Facilitating a Study Circle" included at the back of this guide,

starting on page 247. These readings are from the Study Circles Resource Center in Pomfret, Connecticut, an expert resource in conducting study circles. We thank them for their guidance in facilitating study circles.

If you want to discuss the study circle beforehand with someone from NCSALL, we'd be happy to do so. We can be reached at:

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	bingman@utk.edu

We'd love to hear how it went so that we can improve this and other study circles we produce in the future. We welcome your feedback about how this NCSALL study circle guide worked and how it could be improved. Contact us (telephone, e-mail, or letter) and tell us how it went and what you'd do differently next time.

(SAMPLE FLYER)

Study Circle on Research-based Adult Reading Instruction

Interested in learning what the research says about how to teach reading to adults?

Questions about what research says about teaching adults how to read are particularly relevant as programs and teachers struggle with choosing the most effective ways to develop adults' reading skills. [*insert* name of your organization] is sponsoring a study circle to engage ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners in discussing theories and concepts related to reading instruction.

In this study circle, you will read short articles on reading research. You, together with 7 to 11 other practitioners, will meet three times to:

- Discuss the research on reading instruction for adults and what it means for reading instruction.

- Consider how you might apply the research in your own classroom or program.

- Make a plan for trying a new research-based strategy for improving reading instruction.

The study circle is organized into three sessions of 3½ hours each. You will be asked to read four to five short articles before each session for discussion during the study circle. All readings will be provided by the facilitator of the study circle. We ask that you attend all three sessions.

Session One: Think about and share your own perspective on teaching reading, and discuss the research on reading with other participants.

Session Two: Look more in-depth at the reading research, who adult readers are, and how reading research can be applied to reading instruction.

Session Three: Identify how to assess adults' reading skills and what adult students should know about the reading process. Develop an action plan for using what you have learned in your own classroom or program, identify supports and barriers to change, and develop an action plan as a group.

The study circle is a staff development activity. Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) or Professional Development Points (PDPs) may be available.

The dates and locations of the three study circle sessions are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____ (snow date if applicable)

If you would like to join the study circle, please complete this form and send it to: [*insert* facilitator's name], [*insert* facilitator's address] by [*insert* deadline]. I can also be reached at [*insert* facilitator's phone number] and [*insert* facilitator's email].

Name: _____ Position: _____

Home address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Work telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

ABOUT THE RESEARCH–BASED ADULT READING INSTRUCTION STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE

What is a study circle guide?

This guide includes all of the information and materials you will need to conduct the study circle, including:

- A page listing the preparations you need to make before the session. This includes the newsprints to be made, the handouts and readings to photocopy, and the materials to bring.

- A step-by-step guide to the activities for the session and the approximate time for each activity, as well as facilitator notes and other ideas for conducting the activities. Handouts and readings, ready for photocopying, are included at the end of each session.

The only reading that is not included is the book produced by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*, which can be ordered in paper copy from NIFL or downloaded from the NIFL Web site at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/adult_ed_02.pdf.

Each session includes discussions of the readings and how ideas generated from the readings can be applied to the program contexts of group members. The direction of the discussions will vary with the concerns of each group. It is important that discussions and activities meet the needs of all the group members. As the facilitator, you need to be flexible and may need to modify some activities to fit the needs and learning styles of study circle participants. This study circle guide should be used as a *guide,* not a rigid script.

How is this guide organized?

There are four main sections in this guide:

1. The introduction *About Study Circles* and *About the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle Guide*

2. *Steps for Facilitating the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle*, which include:

   - *To Do Before Session One*

   - *Steps for Facilitating Session One, Handouts for Session One,* and *Readings Assigned for Session Two*

   - *Steps for Facilitating Session Two, Handouts for Session Two,* and *Readings Assigned for Session Three*

   - *Steps for Facilitating Session Three* and *Handouts for Session Three*

The steps include how-to instructions for conducting all the activities in each session and:

   - the newsprints that need to be prepared beforehand, denoted by the icon ⬜ and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being <u>underlined</u>

   - the handouts that need to be photocopied beforehand, denoted by the icon 🗋 and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being *italicized*

   - the readings to be photocopied and handed out to read before the next session, denoted by the icon 📖 and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being **bolded**

> *All handouts for each session and readings for the following session can be found at the end of the "Steps for Facilitating…" that session. For example, the readings to be discussed in Session Two are provided at the end of the "Steps for Facilitating Session One."*

Every session includes an evaluation activity to conduct at the end to get feedback from the participants about what was useful and what could be improved.

At the end of each session, there is a "Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating…" each session, which you can pull out of the notebook and take to the session as an easy reference guide for conducting each activity in that session. It looks like this:

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One	
1. Welcome and Introductions	*10mins., WHOLE GROUP*
• Everyone introduces themselves. • Housekeeping and logistics.	

3. *Note to Facilitator: Suggestions for Organizing a Follow-up Session*, which includes discussion activities and organizing strategies for conducting a follow-up session one month or more after the third and final session, IF participants decide they want to come back together.

4. *Tips for Facilitating a Study Circle*, which includes articles with helpful strategies for conducting a study circle from the Study Circles Resource Center.

What if I want to change the activities listed in the guide?

This guide is intended to help first-time facilitators who want a lot of guidance. It is, however, not intended to be a script that must be followed. If you have a different idea for how to do an activity, you should use it. To help you, throughout the steps, we have included the following features:

- **Another Idea** for several of the activities, which look like the sample at right when you see them in the steps

- **Note to Facilitator,** which look like the sample box at right when you see them in the steps

- **Questions** to prompt discussion are provided for you throughout the guide, and they look like this when you see them in the steps:

? *How would you…?*

Another Idea
(sample)

Note to Facilitator
(sample)
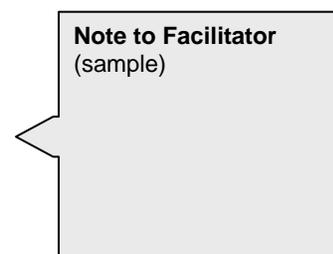
What's the focus of the *Research–based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle?*

This 10½-hour NCSALL study circle is based on recent research and resources about adult reading instruction. The research and related resources include:

- A review of adult reading research conducted by a panel of experts called the Reading Research Working Group, published in a report by John Kruidenier entitled *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*

- Two NCSALL studies on adults' reading profiles (their strengths and needs in the four components of reading)

- A study on adults' reading practices, and the classroom materials and activities that help them increase the type and amount of reading they do in daily life, by NCSALL's Victoria Purcell-Gates

- Resources to help teachers with reading instruction strategies, such as Equipped for the Future Hot Topics, the Adult Reading Component Study Web Site on assessment, and NCSALL Teaching Materials (*Understanding What Reading Is All About*)

How are the three sessions in this study circle organized?

In Session One, study circle members learn about different theories of the reading process and consider their own assumptions about reading. Participants discuss the studies that are included in *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction* and take part in an activity that introduces four major components of reading instruction: alphabetics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

The **objectives** for the first session state that, by the end of Session One, participants will be able to:

- Distinguish the different theories of the reading process and explain what model of reading they use in their own instruction.

- Summarize the types of research.

- Identify the components of reading.

The **main activities in Session One** include:

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Purpose and Overview of the Study Circle, Session One Objectives, and Agenda

3. Participant Expectations and Group Guidelines

4. Models of Reading: Where Do You Stand?

5. Types of Research

6. Introduction to the Components of Reading

7. Evaluation of Session One and Assignment for Session Two

In Session Two, participants review the main points raised in the readings about the four components of reading instruction and discuss the implications of these points for their own teaching. In the closing activity, participants focus on techniques for using these components in teaching reading to beginning- and intermediate-level readers.

The **objectives for the second session** state that, by the end of Session Two, participants will be able to:

- Name specific techniques to teach the components of reading instruction to beginning-level adult readers, and evaluate reading instruction through the framework of Equipped for the Future.

- Analyze who adults are as readers within a skills-based and a socio-cultural context.

- Summarize and judge what the research says about the effect of contextualized instruction on literacy practices in adults' everyday lives.

The **main activities in Session Two** include:

1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda

2. Using the Components of Reading Instruction to Teach Beginning- and Intermediate-Level Readers

3. Understanding Adults as Readers

4. Looking at Literacy Practices and Contextualized Instruction

5. Evaluation of Session Two and Assignment for Session Three

In Session Three, participants consider how viewing reading through different research lenses can give them a better understanding of adults as readers. Participants will discuss a resource for developing reading profiles of adult learners, and they will examine reading instruction through the Equipped for the Future framework. The group will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of introducing adult learners to the four components of reading instruction. Participants identify next steps for teaching reading to adults in their own programs and, as a group, discuss the factors that may hinder them in carrying out their plans as well as the supports that are available to help them.

The **objectives** for the third session state that, by the end of Session Three, participants will be able to:

- Explain the reasons and identify tools for assessing and profiling adult readers' skills.

- Utilize activities for introducing adult learners to the four components of reading instruction.

- Propose steps they will take next for teaching reading to adults.

- Analyze the supports and constraints they may face as they take steps to change how they teach reading to adults.

- Generate a plan for the group's next steps.

The **main activities in Session Three** include:

1. Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda

2. Assessing and Developing Reading Profiles of Adult Learners

3. Discuss Usefulness of the *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials

4. Making an Individual Plan of Action

5. Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints

6. A Plan for Our Group

7. Final Evaluation

Steps for Facilitating the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle

TO DO BEFORE SESSION ONE

<u>Send out the Pre-Meeting Packet to confirmed participants two weeks before the first session.</u> It's also a good idea to call participants one week before the first session to confirm that they received the packet.

The Pre-Meeting Packet for the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle should include the ten items listed below, all of which follow and are ready for photocopying.

We suggest that you organize handouts and readings for participants in two-sided pocket folders and distribute a folder of materials to each participant.

A reminder about the cover letter: You will need to write in the place, date, and time of the first meeting and your telephone number and e-mail address into the letter and sign it before you make copies.

<u>Contents of Pre-Meeting Packet</u>

- Information about the Research-Based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle (cover letter)

- What Is a Study Circle?

- What Study Circles Are, and Are Not: A Comparison

- The Role of the Participant

- Components of Reading

- Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction: Executive Summary*

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* **Note to Facilitator.** The full 130-page document is not included in this study circle guide, but many participants want to have the full document. You can obtain copies for the participants in your study circle in two ways:

1. To order multiple paper copies of the document directly from NIFL, please contact NIFL at **(202) 233-2025.**
2. The document is available on the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Web site. You are free to photocopy this document for all participants in the study circle. To download this document, go to:
    www.nifl.gov/nifl/partnershipforreading/publications/adult.html

- Quick Summaries of the Reading Research

- Synopsis of Instructional Models

- Quantitative and Qualitative Research

- Participants' To-Do Form

Information about the Research–based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle

Date:

Dear Participant:

Thank you for registering to participate in the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle. I really look forward to meeting with you. This study circle was developed by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL).

We will meet three times, and each meeting will be 3½ hours in length for a total of 10½ hours. The first meeting is at [*insert* location] on [*insert* month, day, year] at [*insert* time].

At each session, we will be discussing readings about reading research. Some of these have been produced by NCSALL and some are from other sources. I will be providing you with copies of all the readings.

Before the first meeting, please look at the Participants' To-Do Form and read all the materials before the first session as suggested. We will be discussing these handouts and readings at the first meeting.

I have enclosed a folder for you to keep all of the materials for this study circle. Please bring this folder and all the materials with you to each of our meetings.

If you have any questions about the study circle in general or about what to do before our first meeting, please call me at [*insert* facilitator's telephone number] or send me an e-mail at [*insert* facilitator's e-mail address].

I'm looking forward to some great discussions with all of you.

Sincerely,

[*insert* facilitator's name and title]

What is a study circle?

A study circle:

- is a process for small-group deliberation that is voluntary and participatory;

- is a small group, usually 8 to 12 participants;

- is led by a facilitator who is impartial, who helps manage the deliberation process, but is not an "expert" or "teacher" in the traditional sense;

- considers many perspectives, rather than advocating a particular point of view;

- uses ground rules to set the tone for a respectful, productive discussion;

- is rooted in dialogue and deliberation, not debate;

- has multiple sessions which move from personal experience of the issue, to considering multiple viewpoints, to strategies for action;

- does not require consensus, but uncovers areas of agreement and common concern;

- provides an opportunity for citizens to work together to improve their community.

What study circles are, and are not: A comparison

A study circle IS:

- **a small-group discussion** involving deliberation and problem solving, in which an issue is examined from many perspectives; it is enriched by the members' knowledge and experience, and often informed by expert information and discussion materials; it is aided by an impartial facilitator whose job is to manage the discussion.

A study circle is NOT the same as:

- **conflict resolution,** a set of principles and techniques used in resolving conflict between individuals or groups. (Study circle facilitators and participants sometimes use these techniques in study circles.)

- **mediation,** a process used to settle disputes that relies on an outside neutral person to help the disputing parties come to an agreement. (Mediators often make excellent study circle facilitators, and have many skills in common.)

- **a focus group,** a small group usually organized to gather or test information from the members. Respondents (who are sometimes paid) are often recruited to represent a particular viewpoint or target audience.

- **traditional education with teachers and pupils,** where the teacher or an expert imparts knowledge to the students.

- **a facilitated meeting with a predetermined outcome,** such as a committee or board meeting with goals established ahead of time. A study circle begins with a shared interest among its members, and unfolds as the process progresses.

- **a town meeting,** a large-group meeting which is held to get public input on an issue, or to make a decision on a community policy.

- **a public hearing,** a large-group public meeting which allows concerns to be aired.

The role of the participant

The following points are intended to help you, the participant, make the most of your study circle experience, and to suggest ways in which you can help the group.

- **Listen carefully to others.** Try to understand the concerns and values that underlie their views.

- **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or not considered in the past.

- **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do.

- **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant.

- Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion. Make sure you are giving others the chance to speak.

- **Address your remarks to the group members rather than the facilitator.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

- **Communicate your needs to the facilitator.** The facilitator is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he or she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are, you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

- **Value your own experience and opinions.** Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

- **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with, and don't take it personally if someone challenges your ideas.

Components of Reading

Alphabetics is the whole process of using the letters in an alphabet to represent spoken words.

- It includes an awareness that words are made up of basic sounds (phonemes) and knowledge of the relationship between these basic sounds and the letters used to represent them (word analysis or phonics).

- Learners demonstrate their *phonemic awareness* with tasks that require the manipulation of basic sounds in words, removing sounds from words for example (*cat* becomes *at* when the first sound in removed), or adding sounds (*at* becomes *cat*).

- *Phonics instruction* teaches individual letter-sound correspondences (the sounds made by the letters *b, t,* and *oa,* for example), and how individual letter-sound combinations are blended together to form words, *b-oa-t*).

- *Word analysis instruction* includes phonics as well as other ways to recognize words. Sight word recognition, for example, is taught along with phonics. Common and irregularly spelled words (*was, want, to*) are taught so that they are recognized on sight as whole words rather than being analyzed into smaller parts and blended.

- Morphology, or the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compounding to form words, may also be taught as an aid to word recognition.

Fluency in reading is the ability to read with speed and ease.

- When readers are fluent, they read accurately, without making mistakes in pronunciation, at an appropriate rate, and with proper intonation and rhythm.

Vocabulary is a term used to refer to all of the words in a language.

- One person's vocabulary consists of all the words the person understands or knows the meanings of.

- "Vocabulary words" in reading instruction are usually those words that a person is studying in order to learn their meanings.

Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text.

- Comprehension is a "construction process" because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together to come up with what a text means.

- Readers interact with and become engaged in a text as ideas from the text are combined with their own prior knowledge or experience.

From *Research–Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction: A Guide to the Research for Reading Professionals.* (2001). Washington: DC: National Institute for Literacy, Partnership for Reading. Available at:
http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/partnershipforreading/adult_reading/intro/practices_topa.html

Components of Reading

ALPHABETICS

FLUENCY

Analyzing words and knowing words by sight

- Learn the names of letters
- Learn the sounds of letters
- Break words into sounds (decode)
- Blend the sounds back together
- Learn words by sight

Reading fluently

- Read smoothly
- Read often

Learning new vocabulary

- Learn the meanings of individual words

Understanding what you read

- Read to learn new information
- Read to communicate with other people
- Read for pleasure

VOCABULARY

COMPREHENSION

Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction: Executive Summary

John Kruidenier

Published by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reading Research Working Group (RRWG), a panel of experts on adult reading research and practice, was established by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) in collaboration with the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). It is part of the Institute's efforts to provide educators, parents, and others with access to scientifically based reading research, including research-based tools for improving literacy programs and policies for children, youth, and adults, through the Partnership for Reading.

The purpose of the RRWG was to identify and evaluate existing research related to adult literacy reading instruction in order to provide the field with research-based products including principles and practices for practitioners. This document presents findings from an analysis of the adult basic education (ABE) reading instruction research base and is designed as a resource for practitioners and reading researchers. It focuses on *principles* that can be derived from the research and a research agenda for the future.

For the purposes of the RRWG, "adult reading instruction research" is defined as research related to reading instruction for low-literate adults, aged 16 and older, who are no longer being served in secondary education programs. This includes low-literate adults in community-based literacy centers, family literacy programs, prison literacy programs, workplace literacy programs, and two-year colleges. It includes research related to all low-literate adults in these settings, including adults in ASE (Adult Secondary Education) programs, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs, and adults with a learning or reading disability.

EVALUATING THE RESEARCH

Two recent reports were influential in guiding the work of the RRWG: *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* from the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences and *Report of the*

National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read. The guidelines used for selecting and evaluating ABE reading instruction research are based on those developed by the National Reading Panel (NRP) in their review of research related to reading instruction with children (National Reading Panel, 2000a). For the NRP review, major topics for study were established, studies were located through a literature search, and studies were evaluated using a set of "evidence-based methodological standards."

The RRWG made several modifications to the approach used by the NRP. Important modifications included the addition of topics especially important to adult reading professionals, the inclusion of studies related to the assessment of reading ability, and the inclusion of non-experimental studies as well as those involving the use of control groups.

Like the NRP, the major topics selected for study by the RRWG are those components of reading found by the National Research Council and others to be crucial during reading instruction: alphabetics (phonemic awareness and word analysis), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The ultimate goal in reading is *comprehension.* Readers read a text in order to understand and use the ideas and information contained in it. Comprehension is improved when readers understand the key concepts or *vocabulary* in a text. Reading comprehension may suffer, however, when readers are unable to recognize individual words in a text. A reader may be conceptually ready to understand a text, for example, but will not have the opportunity to do so if he or she cannot read the individual words. To read individual words, the reader must know how the letters in our alphabet are used to represent spoken words (*alphabetics*).This includes knowing how words are made up of smaller sounds (*phonemic awareness*), and how letters and combinations of letters are used to represent these sounds (*phonics* and *word analysis*). The ability to figure out how to read individual words, however, is not sufficient. Readers must also be able to rapidly recognize strings of words as they read phrases, sentences and longer text. *Fluent reading* is crucial to adequate comprehension.

Effective reading and reading instruction cannot occur without sufficient motivation. Motivation is one of the additional topics selected by the RRWG for study, along with others that are especially important for adult reading instruction: computer technology, reading assessment, program goals and setting (family literacy, workplace literacy, and general functional literacy), instructional methods (strategies, material, teacher preparation, and the intensity and duration of instruction), and

specific characteristics of learners that affect instruction (reading level, whether English is their first language, the existence of a learning disability, and motivation).

USE OF K–12 RESEARCH

One task for the RRWG was to identify gaps in the ABE reading research and to consider how these gaps might be addressed. What research is needed and, of more immediate concern, where should the ABE instructor look for suggestions on the best ways to teach reading to ABE learners when the ABE research has not yet addressed a topic? One strong recommendation from the RRWG was to look to the NRP results for K–12 (elementary and secondary school) students, selecting those approaches to reading instruction that were likely to work with adult learners. To do this, the RRWG established criteria for evaluating the application of K–12 reading research to adult reading instruction. These criteria take into account the existing ABE research, the important differences between children and adults, and the strengths and weaknesses of K–12 research in each of the topic areas. NRP findings were used to help fill gaps in the ABE reading instruction research, to provide support when K–12 and ABE research were compatible, or to signal caution when they were contradictory.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH REVIEW

Most of the principles derived from the ABE reading instruction research are "emerging principles" because they are based on a relatively small body of experimental research. There is much more research focusing on children, as demonstrated in the report of the National Reading Panel. The small size of the ABE reading instruction research base precludes establishing more than just a few principles based solidly on large numbers of research studies that have been replicated. Some of the topic areas reviewed contain no or very few research studies. This does not necessarily suggest that the quality of ABE reading instruction research is poorer than K–12 reading instruction research or other bodies of research, only that there is less of it.

Approximately 70 qualifying research studies were identified in the literature search based on the criteria used. From the results reported in these studies, eighteen emerging research-based principles and related practices for ABE reading instruction were identified, along with thirty-two additional trends in the ABE research. Twenty-two specific ideas that might be used to supplement the ABE research were derived from the K-12 research. Emerging *principles* were based on findings from at least two experimental studies (including quasi-experimental studies)

and any number of non-experimental studies. Findings based on fewer than two experimental studies were labeled *trends* rather than principles.

Findings from the adult reading instruction research show that adults can have difficulties with any of the crucial aspects of reading: alphabetics (phonemic awareness and word analysis), fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension. It is important to assess adult students' abilities in each of these areas in order to identify what they already know as well as what they need to work on during instruction. Assessment for instructional purposes is one the first tasks a teacher performs. One emerging principle in the ABE research suggests that assessing each component of reading in order to generate profiles of students' reading ability gives teachers much more instructionally relevant information than any test of a single component can.

Some of the strongest ABE reading instruction research has to do with the assessment of adults' phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness among adult non-readers is almost non-existent and is only a little better among adult beginning readers. Adult beginning readers also have poor phonics or word analysis knowledge. Their sight word knowledge (the ability to recognize words on sight without having to sound them out) may initially be better than expected. Research evidence indicates that adults can be taught word analysis skills within ABE programs and, though the evidence is not as strong, that non-disabled readers can be taught phonemic awareness. Trends in the research suggest that phonemic awareness does not develop as easily among adults with a reading disability.

Teaching alphabetics leads to improved achievement in other aspects of reading. This emerging principle in the adult research is supported by research conducted with children. Research at the K–12 level, unlike ABE research, has identified specific practices that can be used to teach alphabetics. Many of these K–12 practices address topics that are especially important for ABE learners. No research was found related to the alphabetics ability of learners in ESOL adult basic education programs (programs that teach English to speakers of other languages).

There is very little research that reports results from the assessment of ABE students' fluency and vocabulary. We do know that young adults with poor fluency have an average silent reading rate that is much slower than that of normal readers. Emerging principles in the ABE research indicate that fluency can be taught to adults who qualify for ABE programs, that teaching fluency leads to increases in reading achievement, and that one specific technique can be used to help adults

develop their reading fluency. This technique, repeated readings of a text, is also supported by a much larger body of research with children.

The one trend related to the assessment of ABE readers' vocabulary suggests that their vocabulary knowledge is dependent on reading ability. Although, as might be expected, their life experience can give them an advantage as they begin to learn to read (their vocabulary knowledge is much better than their knowledge of alphabetics), this advantage may disappear at higher reading levels. An important trend from the instruction research, supported by research with children, is that contexts that are more interesting or engaging, such as workplace or family contexts for adults, may be especially useful for vocabulary instruction.

Reading comprehension is the ultimate goal for reading. A large-scale national survey of adult literacy provides information about adults' reading comprehension that is more reliable than the information we have about their fluency and vocabulary. Results from this survey indicate that most ABE learners have difficulty integrating and synthesizing information from any but the simplest texts. Although it is likely that poor phonemic awareness, word analysis, fluency, and vocabulary contribute to poor reading comprehension, it is also likely that most ABE adults will need to be taught specific comprehension strategies. Those adults with a learning disability and those whose first language is not English are especially at risk. Although there are more principles and trends related to ABE reading comprehension instruction than for alphabetics, fluency, or vocabulary instruction, the research does not address issues related to these adults.

Three important emerging principles from the ABE reading research suggest that participation in an ABE program can lead to increased reading comprehension achievement, that explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies is effective, and that teaching comprehension along with instruction in other components of reading is also an effective way to improve reading comprehension. The effectiveness of reading comprehension strategy instruction is supported by extensive research with children. In addition, K–12 research has identified eight specific strategies that may be of use to adult educators and also finds that instruction in other aspects of reading can lead to improved comprehension.

Trends in the ABE reading comprehension research also address several issues that are important to adult literacy students and teachers. Although more research is needed, these trends suggest that

comprehension can be improved in most ABE settings, including workplace and family literacy settings; use of adult-oriented content material is an effective way to help improve comprehension; and, dealing briefly but directly with issues related to motivation and how adults feel about their reading can have a positive effect.

In general, the review of ABE reading instruction research found that much more research is needed in almost all of the topic areas addressed. Of the existing research, assessment research is the strongest. Emerging principles suggest that reading can improve in ABE settings, that direct or explicit instruction in various components is effective, and that computer-assisted instruction can improve achievement in some aspects of reading. Basic information about the reading ability of ABE learners is known and fairly sophisticated methods for obtaining assessment information and using it for instruction have been developed. Much more information is needed about ESOL learners and adults with reading disabilities. More information about specific teaching strategies is also needed. With the exception of fluency, specific teaching strategies validated by the research are just beginning to emerge. Also beginning to emerge are findings of special significance for adult educators related to adult-oriented settings and contexts, and issues of motivation and the feelings that result from continued failure in learning to read.

While K-12 research does not address these more adult-oriented issues with the same urgency, the much larger body of reading instruction research conducted with children is compatible with the ABE reading instruction research, offering both support for many ABE findings and specific suggestions for instruction in areas where the ABE research is thin.

Quick Summaries of the Reading Research

ALPHABETICS

Alphabetics Assessment: Quick Summary of the Research

A strong body of research indicates that adult non-readers and those just beginning to learn to read have difficulty with alphabetics. Phonemic awareness (PA) among adult non-readers is almost non-existent and is only a little better among adult beginning readers. Nevertheless, PA does seem to improve as reading ability improves.

For programs that have beginning readers and that plan to teach PA, it is important to assess students' PA ability in order to identify PA skills that they may already possess as well as those they may need to work on. Assessment will also provide a benchmark against which teachers and learners can measure learner progress in the acquisition of PA.

For the same reasons, adult beginning readers' word analysis ability should also be assessed, including, at least, phonics and sight word knowledge. Beginning adult readers, like children who are just beginning to read, have poor phonics knowledge, although their sight word knowledge may, on average, be better than children's. Teachers need to be aware of this strength in sight word knowledge as they teach phonics. During phonics instruction, they should avoid using words that adults may already know as sight words. Simple, low-frequency words and nonsense words might be used instead to ensure that students are using their phonics knowledge, not their sight word knowledge, during phonics instruction.

No research was found related to the alphabetics ability of learners in ESOL adult basic education programs. Trends in the research related to learners with a reading disability (such as dyslexia) suggest that what is true for non-disabled readers may not be true for reading disabled, beginning adult readers. These readers have a great deal of difficulty developing phonemic awareness, and may need special PA instruction, or instruction that does not rely solely on oral PA instruction.

In general, trends suggest that instructors should pay special attention to adult beginning readers' PA. While there may be no critical age after which PA will not develop (younger as well as older adults can

develop PA), it may develop more slowly in adult beginning readers than in children.

Alphabetics Instruction: Quick Summary of the Research

There is research evidence indicating that adults can be taught word analysis skills within ABE programs, and additional evidence, though this evidence is not as strong, that adults in ABE programs can be taught phonemic awareness. In addition, when alphabetics is a significant part of instruction for adult beginning readers, their reading achievement may increase. These findings from the ABE research are supported by a much more extensive body of research conducted with children who are just beginning to learn to read. In addition, K–12 research, unlike ABE research, has identified specific practices that can be used to teach alphabetics (both phonemic awareness and word analysis). These K–12 practices address topics that are especially important for ABE learners: the setting within which instruction takes place; specific teaching strategies and instructional materials; the size of instructional groups; how long alphabetics instruction should last; and, how to work with students at different ability levels.

Most K–12 research does not directly address whether instruction can be effective within important ABE settings: workplace literacy programs, family literacy programs, and general functional literacy programs. Research with children does find, however, that systematic phonics instruction is effective with children at all SES levels. This provides indirect support for the belief that systematic phonics will work with adults from low SES settings, who make up the majority of those in ABE classrooms.

Specific teaching techniques found to be very effective with children could be tried with adults, especially since ABE research has not yet provided teachers with a broad array of techniques. ABE teachers who borrow techniques from K–12 research findings will need to keep in mind the *important differences between elementary school and ABE learners:* instructional materials that children find engaging are not necessarily engaging for adults; adults' goals and experience are very different from children's; most adults cannot spend the same amount of time on reading instruction that children in an elementary school setting can.

What are the most effective alphabetics teaching strategies at the K–12 level that can be tried with adults? For phonemic awareness (PA), the most effective strategies focus on teaching a few specific skills, especially blending (how to put individual phonemes or sounds together

to form words) and segmenting (how to break a word into its individual phonemes). For word analysis (phonics and sight word recognition), effective strategies systematically teach letter-sound correspondences directly and explicitly. They focus on teaching students how to convert individual graphemes (letters and letter combinations) into phonemes and then blend them together to form a word. Or, they focus on converting larger letter combinations such as common spelling patterns (e.g., *as, ing, able, un*) as well as individual graphemes.

K–12 research clearly finds that teaching PA and word analysis in isolation is not the most effective approach to reading instruction. First of all, PA and word analysis should be taught together. PA instruction is most effective when letters, not just sounds, are used for instruction, and this occurs during phonics instruction. Second, word analysis is improved through PA and fluency instruction.

K–12 research also demonstrates that computers can be useful in teaching PA, and that just about any group configuration during instruction will work, although small groups may be more effective than either individual tutoring or classroom instruction. PA training is most effective for those just beginning to read (those reading below GE 1) and for non-disabled readers. Those reading at higher levels and those with a reading disability can also benefit, but more research is needed with these students to identify the most effective approaches, at both the K–12 and adult levels. As noted in the section on alphabetics assessment, it may be especially difficult for disabled adult readers to learn PA.

FLUENCY

Fluency Assessment: Quick Summary of the Research

There is very little research that reports results from the assessment of ABE students' fluency. We know from one large-scale assessment of over one thousand young adults that those with poor fluency have a silent reading rate of about 145 words per minute or slower. This is much slower than the reading rates of average and above average readers. Another study suggests that adult beginning readers' fluency is similar to that of children who are just beginning to read.

Results from both studies suggest that it is important for teachers to assess adult readers fluency. Also, because oral reading, not silent reading, is one of the most important methods used to teach fluency, completion of assessment studies of ABE students' oral reading fluency (accuracy and rate) should be a priority.

Fluency Instruction: Quick Summary of the Research

Two emerging principles for fluency instruction were identified, and no trends. Several studies suggest that fluency can be taught to adults who qualify for ABE programs, and that teaching fluency may lead to increases in reading achievement. The teaching strategies used in these studies include practice in repeated oral reading of text; text units of various sizes are read repeatedly to improve reading speed and accuracy. Text includes longer passages, paragraphs, phrases, words, and parts of words such as syllables.

Teaching strategies that instructors can use to improve their students' reading fluency have been the subject of much more research with children than with adults. Results from the NRP review of K–12 research support the major findings from the ABE fluency research; fluency can be taught and teaching fluency leads to increased reading achievement, especially reading comprehension. In addition, K–12 results indicate that fluency instruction is useful for students with reading problems through the 12th grade, not just for beginning readers. The teaching strategy found most effective for children was guided and repeated oral reading of passages of text, similar to approaches found to be effective with adults. This is a fairly simple teaching strategy. Students read a passage multiple times while a teacher provides assistance, including information about rate and accuracy levels, help with difficult words, or modeling.

Fluency instruction that focuses on smaller units of text, such as individual letters, parts of words, or word lists, is not addressed in the NRP review of fluency research, although systematic phonics instruction was found to improve reading fluency. Of special importance for ABE teachers, perhaps, is the potential that fluency instruction may have as a motivational tool. Its effects for children are immediate. They experience improvement in their fluency on the texts used for instruction right away.

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary Assessment: Quick Summary of the Research

There is very little research that reports results from the assessment of adult basic education (ABE) students' vocabulary knowledge. One trend from the research literature suggests that teachers should give special attention to ABE learners' vocabulary assessment. This research compared the oral vocabulary knowledge of children and adults who had word recognition scores between GE 3 to 5. Even though adults have more life experience than children, their vocabulary knowledge appears

to be no better on average than children's by the time both are able to read (decode) text written at about the fifth grade level (GE 5).

Vocabulary Instruction: Quick Summary of the Research

No emerging principles and very few trends for vocabulary instruction were identified in the ABE research. Does participation in ABE increase students' vocabulary achievement? Overall, results from the research are inconclusive: several studies found that participating students' vocabulary knowledge improved, but several also found no improvement.

While no overall principles or trends were found, trends related to some vocabulary topics did emerge. These topics included goals and setting, teaching strategies, and duration of instruction. Initial research suggests that reading vocabulary can be improved in general functional literacy settings, although teaching vocabulary in a specific setting, such as a family literacy or workplace setting, may be more effective.

One study described a specific approach to teaching vocabulary to ABE students. Vocabulary instruction included content-specific listening comprehension exercises and the use of student generated reading material based on these exercises. This approach was combined with phonics instruction, however, so it was not possible to determine how much the vocabulary instruction itself was responsible for increases in reading vocabulary. Initial research also suggests that the longer ABE students remain in effective programs, the more their vocabulary will improve.

More research is needed before any teaching practices emerge that are related to learner characteristics, specific instructional material, and the effects of teacher training. Two of these topics, learner characteristics and instructional material, are addressed by vocabulary instruction research with children. The NRP review of K–12 vocabulary instruction also addresses topics related to goals and setting and specific teaching strategies. Overall, the NRP review of K–12 vocabulary instruction research did not produce findings that are as strong as those related to alphabetics and fluency. So suggestions for vocabulary instruction at the ABE level derived from K–12 research are not as strong either.

One trend from the NRP review supports a finding from the ABE research. Contexts that are more interesting or engaging, such as workplace or family contexts for adults, may be useful for vocabulary instruction. Additional trends from K–12 research that may be of particular interest to adult educators include those having to do with the

importance of repetition in vocabulary instruction, and the suggestion that restructuring vocabulary tasks may be especially useful for at-risk learners. Restructuring is done to help students understand what they need to do when reading and learning new words.

COMPREHENSION

Comprehension Assessment: Quick Summary of the Research

A recent, large-scale study of adults' reading comprehension (the National Adult Literacy Assessment, or NALS) provides information about adults' reading comprehension that is more reliable than the information we have about adults' fluency and vocabulary. Results from the NALS indicate that most ABE learners will have difficulty integrating and synthesizing information from any but the simplest texts. It is important for instructors to assess their ABE learners' ability to acquire and use information from text in order to prepare for instruction and to measure progress.

Trends in the research suggest that instructors should assess their adult learners' knowledge of reading comprehension strategies. It is likely that most ABE adults will need to be taught specific comprehension strategies, such as how to monitor their understanding of a text as they read. Some research suggests that results from comprehension assessment may vary quite a bit depending on the test used and when it is administered, so instructors need to choose comprehension tests carefully.

The NALS also gives us some information about ABE adults with learning disabilities and those in ESOL programs. Reading comprehension assessment is important for both of these groups. Adults whose first language is not English or adults with a learning disability are more likely to have reading comprehension deficits. Assessment should also be used to help determine whether any secondary issues related to any reading comprehension difficulties need to be addressed. For adults in ESOL programs, knowledge of the English language will be an issue. For adults with a reading disability, problems with enabling skills such as alphabetics or fluency may be an issue.

Comprehension Instruction: Quick Summary of the Research

There are more principles and trends related to ABE reading comprehension instruction than for alphabetics, fluency, or vocabulary instruction. Like the research in these other areas, however, research related to reading comprehension does not address issues related to most

of the learner characteristics subtopics (the reading level, ESOL, and learning disabilities subtopics).

Quite a few studies have measured adult learners' reading comprehension in order to determine whether it is better after participation in an ABE program. One of the three emerging principles derived from ABE reading comprehension research suggests that placing adults in ABE programs can lead to improved reading comprehension, although specific instructional practices that lead to improvement are only beginning to be identified.

Trends from studies that identify a programs' instructional goals or setting suggest that reading comprehension can be improved within workplace, family, and general functional literacy settings. Furthermore, participation in workplace and family literacy programs might lead to better reading comprehension achievement than participation in general functional literacy programs.

What specific instructional methods and materials result in improved reading comprehension for adult learners? Although much more research is needed, several studies point to some very general approaches that may be effective. These include approaches that provide direct as opposed to incidental instruction in comprehension strategies, approaches that focus on more than one aspect of reading, and enabling settings or approaches.

One emerging principle suggests that direct instruction in comprehension strategies is effective. Another, based on several studies with positive results, suggests teaching comprehension along with instruction in other reading components.

In some ABE instructional settings, reading comprehension has been improved by manipulating the classroom environment. Some enabling factors in the classroom environment suggested by trends in the ABE research are: including more learner-centered activities; providing assistance to teachers in the classroom with volunteers or paid assistants; and, dealing explicitly with issues related to adults' motivation and how they feel about their reading.

Results from comprehension instruction studies at the K–12 level support the ABE principles and some of the trends. The NRP review found strong support for the direct instruction of specific comprehension strategies. At the K–12 level, several specific strategies were found to be effective: question answering, question asking, summary writing, comprehension monitoring, use of graphic and semantic organizers, use

of story structure, and cooperative learning (where students work together while learning strategies). The use of an approach that focuses on several components of reading is also supported by very strong evidence from research at the K–12 level. The NRP review of K–12 research found that alphabetics instruction, fluency instruction, and vocabulary instruction all lead to increased reading comprehension achievement.

In addition to the individual comprehension strategies mentioned above, the NRP also found that teaching the use of multiple strategies was an effective approach. Students' reading comprehension improves when they learn how to flexibly apply combinations of the strategies listed above.

Some of the K–12 research addresses the issue of reading level, or how effective various approaches to teaching reading comprehension are with learners at different ability levels. Learning about the structure of stories and then using this knowledge to understand them is a strategy that works best with poor readers. Those in the seventh grade and higher, and good readers in the lower grades, benefit most from multiple strategy instruction.

One additional topic addressed by the K–12 research that may be of interest to adult educators is teacher preparation. A relatively small set of studies examined by the NRP suggests that teachers can learn how to teach reading comprehension to students and that their students can become aware of comprehension strategies, use them, and improve their reading. Although this is encouraging, the NRP also notes that even experienced teachers may have trouble implementing strategy instruction. This may be especially important for ABE settings, where teachers are frequently less experienced than their counterparts at the K–12 level.

From NIFL's Web site:
http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/adult_reading/adult_reading.html

Synopsis of Instructional Models*

Skills-Driven Model: In this model, teachers focus heavily on the skills needed to accurately and automatically recognize letters and words. They see these skills not only as crucial but primary, in that they must be mastered before comprehension can take place.

> *Decoding takes selective attention when it is unfamiliar or not fully mastered. And comprehension also requires attention. So, it is necessary to practice decoding skills to the point of mastery before the process of comprehension—the real goal of reading—is possible.*

Comprehension-Driven Model: In this model, teachers believe meaning, or comprehension, is the driving force of the reading process. Because this process involves cyclical cognitive strategy use and synergistic relations between the language cuing systems, learners must always be dealing with whole texts that are read for authentic purposes.

> *Readers bring all of their experiences and background knowledge to the reading task. They expect meaning from print and they coordinate various language cue systems to get at that meaning….comprehension is not dependent on linear, accurate, automatic decoding and letter-word recognition.*

Integrated Model: In this model, teachers first involve students in purposeful (to the student) reading and writing, then pull out some skills—ranging from decoding to text structure and comprehension—for focused work.

> *Readers read by focusing on comprehension and letter features roughly at the same time…meaning and syntactic context influence perception and recognition of letters and words.*

> **?** *Which model best represents how you <u>remember learning to read</u>?*
>
> **?** *Which model best represents how you <u>currently teach reading</u>?*
>
> **?** *Which model best reflects how you would <u>like to teach reading</u>?*

*From "There's Reading…and Then There's Reading" by Victoria Purcell–Gates, *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 1, Issue B.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research

As we start to read Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Reading Instruction, you may want a reminder of the major categories of research. As a refresher…

In the field of reading, there is no consensus about which model of reading is best. Therefore, we need different types of research to understand how people learn to read.

<u>To understand better the effectiveness of a particular model of reading instruction on</u> improving specific reading skills, large-scale research measures reading outcomes. This type of research is typically <u>quantitative</u>; "things" (such as test scores) are counted to understand what works for many students.

Quantitative research attempts to:

- explain reality with facts.

- show cause and effect.

- predict what will happen under certain circumstances.

Examples of quantitative methods are experiments and surveys with a predetermined set of questions. Quantitative research often uses statistical methods to draw conclusions about a large population from a smaller sample, but it may not provide all the answers about why a particular method does or doesn't work with specific students.

<u>To understand better what people do with reading in their daily lives</u>, smaller-scale research looks at people's motivations to read and the different contexts in which they read. This type of research is typically <u>qualitative</u>; people are interviewed and their stories and life experiences observed and recorded for an in-depth understanding of what works with specific individuals and communities.

Qualitative research attempts to:

- understand reality from the point of view of the participants in the study.

- understand the complexity of a situation.

- develop theories about a problem.

Examples of qualitative methods include case studies, observations, and interviews. Qualitative research provides a great deal of information, but does not usually lead to conclusions that can be generalized to a larger population.

Participants' To-Do Form

Session	Date	What to Do Before Session
One		Read the documents and articles you received in the Pre-Meeting Packet. Highlight interesting points and jot down any questions that come to mind.
Two		*You will receive these readings during Session One.* Readings Assigned for Session Two: • **Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms** – Use for reference. • **Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults** – Read the entire six-page article. • **EFF Hot Topics: Read with Understanding** – Read the entire 16-page article. • **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy** – Skim the entire article. Then read the three-page case history of Richard. • Excerpts from **Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices** – Read the entire 10-page excerpt. • **Taking Literacy Skills Home.** Read the entire three-page article. Think about how the concepts presented in each reading might apply to the adult learners with whom you work.

Participants' To–Do Form (continued)

Session	Date	What to Do Before Session
Three		*You will receive these readings during Session Two.* Reading Assigned for Session Three: • **Adult Reading Component Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief** – Read the entire three-page article. • **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief** – Read the entire four-page article. • **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site)** – Read the entire four-page article. • **Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials** – Read the Introduction. Skim the two-page outline. • **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension** – Skim through all pages; read the pages on the reading component you are most interested to learn more about or address in your instruction. Jot down your impressions and questions as you read these sections. Review any notes you have (or have been typed up from group discussions) from the previous sessions. Spend time reflecting on the specific teaching strategies suggested by the research, and begin to think of what you might like to do next in your classroom or program to implement what you have learned.

STEPS FOR FACILITATING SESSION ONE

Objectives: By the end of this first session, participants will be able to…

- Distinguish the different theories of the reading process and explain what model of reading they use in their own instruction.

- Summarize the types of research.

- Identify the components of reading.

Time: 3½ hours

Preparation:

⬦ NEWSPRINTS (Prepare ahead of time: <u>Underlined</u> in the steps)

___ Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles

___ Session One Objectives

___ Session One Agenda

___ What I Hope to Get from the Study Circle

___ Skills-Driven Model

___ Comprehension-Driven Model

___ Integrated Model

___ Ways of Knowing What's Working (and What's Not)

___ Alphabetics

___ Fluency

___ Vocabulary

___ Comprehension

___ Useful / How to Improve

📄 **HANDOUTS** (Photocopy ahead of time: *Italicized* in the steps)

___ Overview of Study Circle

___ Sample Ground Rules

(Make a few extra copies of the Pre-Meeting Packet handouts for participants who forget to bring them.)

📖 **READINGS ASSIGNED FOR SESSION TWO** (Photocopy ahead of time: **Bolded** in the steps)

___ Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms

___ Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults

___ EFF Hot Topics: Read with Understanding

___ Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy

___ Excerpts from Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices

___ Taking Literacy Skills Home

MATERIALS

___ blank newsprint sheets

___ newsprint easel

___ markers, pens, tape

Steps:

Another Idea

Ask participants: "What was an extra arrangement you had to make to free up time to be here today?"

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** (10 MINUTES)

- **Welcome participants** to the first meeting of the study circle.

- **Introduce yourself** and state your role as facilitator of the study circle. Explain how you came to facilitate this study circle and who is sponsoring it.

- **Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly** (name, program, role) and to say whether they have ever taken part in a study circle. You could also ask them to very briefly add something more personal to their introduction, such as describing one aspect of their journey to this first meeting of the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle.

> **Note to Facilitator**
> Since time is very tight, it's important to move participants along gently but firmly if they are exceeding the time limit for introductions.

- **Make sure that participants know** where bathrooms are located, when the session will end, when the break will be, and any other "housekeeping" information.

2.   PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY CIRCLE, SESSION ONE OBJECTIVES, AND AGENDA   (15 MINUTES)

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles</u> and review the purpose with participants.

> **Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles**
>
> 1. To help practitioners read, discuss, and use research to improve their practice.
>
> 2. To generate recommendations and practical suggestions for other practitioners or policymakers about how to translate research into practice.

- 🗋   **Distribute the handout** *Overview of Study Circle.* Give participants a minute to read the handout, then provide a brief overview of the three sessions.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session One Objectives</u> **and review the objectives** briefly with the group.

Session One Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Distinguish the different theories of the reading process and explain what model of reading you use in your own instruction.

- Summarize the types of research.

- Identify the components of reading.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session One Agenda</u> **and describe each activity briefly.** Ask if people have questions about the agenda.

Session One Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (Done!)

- Purpose and Overview of Study Circle (Done!)

- Session One Objectives (Done!)

- Overview of Agenda (Doing)

- Participant Expectations and Group Guidelines

- Models of Reading: Where Do You Stand?

  BREAK

- Types of Research

- Introduction to the Components of Reading

- Evaluation of Session One and Assignment for Session Two

3.   PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS AND GROUP GUIDELINES   (25 MINUTES)

- 🗋   **Direct attention to** *The Role of the Participant* **handout,** which was included in the Pre-Meeting Packet. Ask participants if they agree with this role and whether they would like to add or change anything about their role in this study circle.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>What I Hope to Get from the Study Circle</u>.

What I Hope to Get from the Study Circle
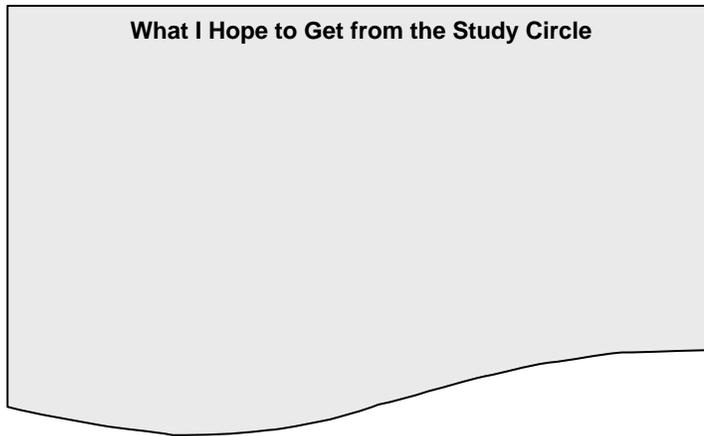
Ask each person to make a short statement in response to this question. Write their statement on the newsprint as they say it. (If someone begins to talk about his or her teaching situation, etc., point to the <u>Session One Agenda</u> newsprint and remind them that there will be a chance to talk about that a little later in the meeting.)

- **After everyone has made a statement, summarize what you heard.** Refer to the *Overview of Study Circle* handout and talk about how and where in the three-session study circle their needs will be met. Also, be clear with participants about learning expectations they may have stated that are not part of the study circle. For example, the study circle is *not a training* that will provide them with handouts or demonstrations on teaching techniques or

materials for teaching. This study circle will, however, cue them into the areas of reading instruction that research has shown to be important and effective in teaching adults. Hopefully this research will guide them as they make decisions about how best to teach adults to read.

- ☐ **Refer participants to the handout** *What Study Circles Are, and Are Not: A Comparison,* which was also included in their Pre-Meeting Packet. Explain that the study circle is for discussing:

  - theories and concepts from the research

  - their context and experiences in relation to the topic

  - their ideas about the implications of the theories and research for their own and other practitioners' practice and policy

  Ask if there are any questions about what a study circle is or isn't, or about the design of this one.

- **Next, explain that one of the things that helps study circles to run smoothly** is an agreement among participants about the ground rules to follow during the meetings and discussions.

Another Idea

Invite participants to set the ground rules to be followed for the study circle. Write ground rules on newsprint as participants say them.

After five minutes or so, distribute the handout *Sample Ground Rules* and ask participants if there are any ground rules on this handout that they would like to add to their list. Add these to the newsprint.

- ☐ **Distribute the handout** *Sample Ground Rules.* After giving participants a few minutes to review it, ask if there are any ground rules they would like to add to or delete from the list. Write these on newsprint as they are mentioned.

- **Ask if everyone agrees with these ground rules.** Use the "I can live with that one" criterion, i.e., you might not be crazy about one or more of these but you can "live with it" and agree to abide by it. The discussion should be only around those ground rules that participants find objectionable and "can't live by." Let participants know that it is your job, as facilitator, to remind them of these ground rules if you see them being broken.

Session One Steps

4.   MODELS OF READING: WHERE DO YOU STAND?   (45 MINUTES)

- 📄   **Refer to the handout** *Synopsis of Instructional Models* that was included in their Pre-Meeting Packet. Explain that there are a number of ways to view the reading process, and participants will start to investigate what the research says about reading by first considering their own beliefs about how reading works.

- **Post the three newsprints** <u>Skills-Driven Model</u>, <u>Comprehension-Driven Model</u>, **and** <u>Integrated Model</u> **on three different walls around the room.** Explain that you have reworded the quotes about the instructional models to make them easier to discuss.

Skills-Driven Model

<u>Rationale</u>: When readers don't decode fluently, it takes work to do so. Understanding the meaning also takes work. So, getting good at decoding comes before comprehension is possible.

<u>Beliefs</u>:

Comprehension-Driven Model

<u>Rationale</u>: Readers have background knowledge from their life that they use when they read. Because of this, they can understand text even if they don't yet decode fluently.

<u>Beliefs</u>:

Integrated Model

<u>Rationale</u>: Readers can do both at the same time: focus on letters *and* get the meaning. One helps the other.

<u>Beliefs</u>:

- **As a way to refresh people's memories of each model of reading,** ask the group to draw from the key quotes on the newsprints to answer the following question:

  ? *If you used this model, what else would you believe?*

  Record their responses on the respective newsprints (<u>Skills-Driven Model</u>, <u>Comprehension-Driven Model</u>, and <u>Integrated Model</u>).

- Explain to the group that they will now engage in an activity where **they will consider their response to two questions at the bottom of the handout** *Synopsis of Instructional Models,* which was included in their Pre-Meeting Packet.

  ? *Which model best represents how you currently teach reading?*

  ? *Which model best reflects how you would like to teach reading?*

- First, **ask participants to stand next to the newsprint that best reflects their current approach to teaching.** Then, without inviting any discussion, **ask participants to now stand next to the newsprint that best reflects how they would like to teach reading.** While people are still standing, facilitate a discussion on either (a) or (b) below:

  a) If participants are standing at different newsprints, invite at least one participant from each model to explain why they wish to teach reading based on that particular model.

  b) If participants are all standing at the same newsprint during both questions, ask them to explain why they feel that model works best.

  Remind participants that this activity is for discussion purposes only. Suggest that they move from one model to another if they are persuaded by their colleagues' arguments or perspectives.

BREAK (15 minutes)

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5. Types of Research (25 minutes)

- ☐ **Refer to the handout** *Quantitative and Qualitative Research* that was included in their Pre-Meeting Packet.

  Ask if they have any questions about these two types of research, and ask if anyone else in the group can respond to the questions raised. Since one of the articles that they will be reading for Session Two includes references to different types of research, this handout can help familiarize them with the terminology used in the article.

- **Explain that you would like them to now consider the kinds of "evidence"** they use, whether quantitative, qualitative, or both, to ascertain the effectiveness of different reading strategies they may use in the classroom. Point out that the purpose of this activity is to demonstrate that in their own classrooms and programs they may be using evidence similar to the types of evidence on which research claims are based.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Ways of Knowing What's Working (and What's Not)</u>.

Ways of Knowing What's Working (and What's Not)		
<u>Evidence</u>	<u>Quantitative</u>	<u>Qualitative</u>

  Ask the group to brainstorm the ways they measure or observe students' progress in reading. Ask them to be as specific as possible; for example, progress in test scores,

students telling them that they are reading more at home, etc. List each way under "Evidence" on the newsprint.

When the group has generated at list of evidence, ask the participants to determine whether each item is quantitative or qualitative in nature. Place a check in the appropriate column.

- Facilitate a whole group discussion about this list by asking such questions as:

    ? *What do you think this list tells us about how we assess the effectiveness of reading instruction?*

    ? *What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of using quantitative measures to gauge reading improvement? Of using qualitative measures?*

    Make the point that both quantitative and qualitative data in research have their own set of rules to follow to ensure that the research is rigorous and reliable. Both types provide us with unique insights into the topic or issue under examination.

    Explain that one difference between what we do in our classroom data collection and much of the research we will be reading for this study circle is that, in our classroom, we are trying to determine if what we are doing is working, but we aren't comparing that data to data from students who are not in our classes. In many research studies, however, researchers are trying to learn whether one particular instructional approach is better than another approach, or better than no instruction. So, research often compares two different groups of students.

- Explain that for the remainder of Session One and in Session Two, we will be focusing primarily on what quantitative research tells us about how to teach adults to read. In Session Three, we will include findings from qualitative research.

6. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPONENTS OF READING   (60 MINUTES)

- **Explain that participants will be working in pairs or small groups to discuss the components** in greater depth.

- **Post around the room the four newsprints of reading components:** Alphabetics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.

Alphabetics

Main Points

- When alphabetics are part of beginning reading instruction, reading achievement may increase.

- Beginning adult readers may have better sight word knowledge than phonemic awareness.

- Specific teaching strategies may include blending and segmenting.

- Phonemic awareness and word analysis should be taught together.

Implications for Our Teaching

Questions

Fluency

Main Points

- It is important to assess adult readers' oral reading fluency.

- Teaching fluency may lead to increases in reading achievement.

- One strategy to increase fluency is guided and repeated oral reading.

Implications for Our Teaching

Questions

Vocabulary

Main Points

- Even though adults have more life experience, their oral vocabulary knowledge may be limited if their reading level is low.

- Teaching vocabulary through specific contexts (e.g., workplace) may be useful for vocabulary instruction.

Implications for Our Teaching

Questions

Comprehension

Main Points

- It is likely that most adults in ABE classes will need to be taught specific comprehension strategies.

- Direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies may be effective in improving comprehension.

- Instruction in alphabetics, fluency, and vocabulary also improves reading comprehension.

Implications for Our Teaching

Questions

- **Point out the four newsprints posted around the room.** Tell participants that you have noted a few main points from the readings on each newsprint. Explain that in this next activity, they will work in pairs to add notes, implications, and questions about each of these reading components.

  Point out that making notes in the margins while reading is a specific comprehension strategy often taught to readers

to help them improve their metacognitive reading skills. So if they took notes while they read, they engaged in the type of comprehension strategy that their students might also find useful.

Invite participants to **find a partner** that they have not yet had the chance to work with and whom they may not already know.

Another Idea

You could also form the pairs by having participants count off by twos or by pairing teachers with similar roles together (i.e., teachers who teach ESOL, teachers who teach in a workplace, etc.).

- **Ask each pair to go to one of the four newsprints** where they will:

    - Add additional main points, using any notes they made while they read the readings for this session

    - Write implications for teaching they feel these points raise

    - List questions they have about that component of reading

Tell participants that they will have 15 minutes to work, and then they will be asked to move to the next newsprint.

Note to Facilitator

Pairs can start with any of the four newsprints. If people seem confused, assign pairs to a newsprint.

- **After 15 minutes ask the pairs to rotate to the next newsprint** to build on what was written by the previous pair. If there are less than four pairs, the first pair should move to a newsprint that has not been addressed.

In addition to adding main points, implications, and questions, ask participants to place a check by those comments already listed that they agree with and, if they have a different perspective about a main point, to list it. Tell them that they will have ten minutes to work at this second newsprint.

Note to Facilitator

As participants are working at the newsprints, let them know when they have two minutes left before moving on to the next newsprint.

- **After 10 minutes, ask the pairs to rotate to the third newsprint** to build on what has been written by the first two pairs. Tell them they will have five minutes to work at this newsprint.

Note to Facilitator

Given that several points, implications, and questions will have been written by previous pairs during the first two rotations, pairs will probably need less time during the last two rotations to add any remaining points, implications, and questions.

- **After five minutes, ask the pairs to rotate to their fourth newsprint** and spend five minutes reading and adding any additional comments they wish.

- After all pairs have worked at each newsprint, **ask the group to take a few minutes to silently walk around to the newsprints,** considering the main points, comments, implications, and questions raised.

- **Facilitate a whole group discussion about what has been written on the newsprints.** Begin by asking if anyone wishes to respond to any of the questions listed on the newsprints. Continue the discussion by asking such questions as:

  ? *What stands out for you in terms of main points, implications, or questions raised around each of these components?*

  ? *What are your thoughts about teaching these component skills to the students with whom you work?*

  ? *What might be the implications of incorporating the components of reading in your own teaching practice?*

  Explain that you will save these newsprints and revisit them during Session Three when each person will be asked to make an action plan for teaching adults to read. The questions they have raised now may inform their next steps.

7. **EVALUATION OF SESSION ONE AND ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION TWO** (15 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that, in the time left, you would like to get feedback from them about this first session.** You will use this feedback in shaping the next two sessions of the study circle.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Useful/How to Improve</u>.

<table>
<tr><td>Useful</td><td>How to Improve</td></tr>
</table>

Ask participants first to tell you what was useful or helpful to them about the design of this first session of the study circle. Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under "Useful."

- **Then ask participants for suggestions on how to improve this design.** Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under "How To Improve." If anyone makes a negative comment that's not in the form of a suggestion, ask the person to rephrase it as a suggestion for improvement, and then write the suggestion on the newsprint.

- **Do not make any response to participants' comments during this evaluation.** It is *very* important that you do not defend or justify anything you have done in the study circle or anything about the design, as this will discourage further suggestions. If anyone makes a suggestion you don't agree with, just nod your head. If you feel some response is needed, rephrase their concern: "So you feel that what we should do instead of the small group discussion is …? Is that right?"

- 📖 **Distribute Readings Assigned for Session Two:**

    - 📖 **Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms.** Tell participants that this is for them to use as a reference.

- 📖   **Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults.**   Tell participants that they should read this entire article.

- 📖   EFF **Hot Topics: Read with Understanding.** Tell participants that they should read the entire handout.

- 📖   **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy.** Tell participants that they should *skim* the entire article and then read the case history of Richard.

- 📖   Excerpts from **Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices.**   Tell participants that they should read the entire excerpt.

- 📖   **Taking Literacy Skills Home.**   Tell participants that they should read the entire article.

- 📄   **Refer participants again to the handout** *Participants' To-Do Form*.   Go over the instructions for what they are to do to prepare for Session Two.   To the best of your ability, make sure that participants are clear about what they are required to read before the next meeting.   Find out if they have any questions about what they are to do before the next session.   Thank them for the preparation they did for this first session.

- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.**   If applicable, explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next meeting in the event of bad weather.   Be sure that you have everyone's home and/or work telephone numbers so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One

1. Welcome and Introductions	10 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Everyone introduces themselves.
- Housekeeping and logistics.

2. Purpose and Overview of the Study Circle, Session One Objectives, and Agenda	15 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post newsprints; pass out handout *Overview of Study Circle*; review.

3. Participant Expectations and Group Guidelines	25 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Review handout *The Role of Participant*, post newsprint <u>What I Hope to Get from this Study Circle.</u>
- List responses to <u>What I Hope to Get from this Study Circle</u>.
- Summarize against *Overview of Study Circle*.
- Refer to *What Study Circles Are and Are Not: A Comparison*.
- Pass around handout *Sample Group Rules*; add rules; discuss.

4. Models of Reading: Where Do You Stand?	45 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post three newsprints (<u>Skills-Driven Model, Comprehension-Driven Model, Integrated Model</u>) around room.
- Whole group discussion:
  - **?** *If you used this model, what else would you believe?*
- Stand-up discussion:
  - **?** *Which model best represents how you currently teach reading?*
  - **?** *Which model best reflects how you would like to teach reading?*

15-Minute Break

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One

5. Types of Research	*25 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Refer to *Quantitative/Qualitative Research* handout.
- Post newsprint: <u>Ways of Knowing What's Working (and What's Not)</u>; brainstorm and list kinds of evidence they now use; mark each quantitative or qualitative.
- Whole group discussion:
  - **?** *What do you think this list tells us about how we assess the effectiveness of reading instruction?*
  - **?** *What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of using quantitative measures to gauge reading improvement? Of using qualitative measures?*

6. Introduction to the Components of Reading	*60 mins., PAIRS, then WHOLE GROUP*

- Post <u>Alphabetics</u>, <u>Fluency</u>, <u>Vocabulary</u>, <u>Comprehension</u> newsprints.
- Pairs in turn go to each newsprint; they will:
  - Add additional main points, using any notes they made while they read the readings for this session
  - Write implications for teaching they feel these points raise
  - List questions they have about that component of reading
- Pairs at each newsprint: 15 minutes, 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 5 minutes.
- Silent gallery review of all newsprints.
- Whole group discussion:
  - **?** *What stands out for you in terms of main points, implications, or questions raised around each of these components?*
  - **?** *What are your thoughts about teaching these component skills to the students with whom you work?*
  - **?** *What might be the implications of incorporating the components of reading in your own teaching practice?*

7. Evaluation of Session One and Assignment for Session Two	*15 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Post newsprint <u>Useful/How to Improve</u>.
- Hand out **Readings Assigned for Session Two**; refer to *Participants' To-Do Form.*
- Remind participants of next session date, time, and location.

Materials to Hand Out in Session One

CONTENTS

Handouts for Session One

> Handout ☐: *Overview of Study Circle*
>
> Handout ☐: *Sample Ground Rules*

Readings Assigned for Session Two

> Reading 📖: **Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms**
>
> Reading 📖: **Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults**
>
> Reading 📖: **EFF Hot Topics: Read with Understanding**
>
> Reading 📖: **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy**
>
> Reading 📖: Excerpts from **Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices**
>
> Reading 📖: **Taking Literacy Skills Home**

Overview of Study Circle

SESSION ONE

Get introduced to study circles, share your perspective on teaching reading, and begin to discuss the research on reading.

SESSION TWO

Look in more depth at the reading research, who adults readers are, and how reading research can be applied to reading instruction.

SESSION THREE

Consider how to assess adults' reading skills and what adult students should know about the reading process. Develop an action plan to use what you have learned in your own classroom or program, identify supports and barriers to change, and decide on next steps for your group.

Sample Ground Rules

The Study Circles Resource Center

- Everyone gets a fair hearing.

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- Share "air time."

- If you are offended, say so, and say why.

- You can disagree, but don't personalize it; stick to the issues. No name-calling or stereotyping.

- Speak for yourself, not for others.

- One person speaks at a time.

- What is said in the group stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that rule.

Definitions of Key Terms and Acronyms

(From the National Institute for Literacy's Partnership for Reading Web site:
www.nifl.gov/nifl/partnershipforreading/adult_reading/glossary/glossary.html)

ABE. Adult basic education.

ALPHABETICS. Alphabetics is the use of letters in an alphabet to represent
spoken words. Because spoken words are made up of smaller, more
basic sounds (phonemes), alphabetics includes phonemic awareness,
or knowing how phonemes are combined to make words. It also
includes phonics or letter-sound knowledge—knowing the
relationship between letters or letter combinations and the sounds
they represent, and how these are put together to form words. The
word *cat*, for example, is made up of three sounds represented by the
letters *c*, *a*, and *t.*

ASSESSMENT. Gathering data to understand students' strengths and
weaknesses in reading (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 12).

ASSESSMENT PROFILE. A reading profile is obtained by measuring a
student's ability in several aspects of the reading process: alphabetics,
fluency, vocabulary, and/or comprehension. Profiles are used during
reading instruction to highlight students' relative strengths and needs
in reading.

AUTOMATICITY. Automaticity in reading is the ability to read fluently
without having to spend a lot of effort on or attention to recognizing
words. This saved effort or attention can be devoted to
comprehension, for example.

BLENDING. In phonemic awareness instruction, putting individual
sounds together to form a word or a part of a word. In phonics
instruction, putting together individual sounds represented by letters
or letter combinations. For example, the sounds represented by the
letters *c*, *a*, and *t*, when blended make the word *cat*.

BLENDS. In phonics instruction, describes common sounds consisting of
more than one phoneme or basic sound. Examples of blends are *str*
(three basic sounds blended together), *br* (two sounds), *gl*, and *spl.*

CLOZE TEST. A test of reading comprehension. Students read a passage
in which words are missing at regular intervals (every fifth word is
deleted for example). The student must figure out what the missing
words are as they read.

COMPREHENSION. See **READING COMPREHENSION**.

COMPREHENSION MONITORING. A reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers are aware or conscious of how well they are understanding a text as they read, and know what to do (what procedures to use) when they have a problem in understanding (National Reading Panel, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH TO TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION. Students work together in pairs or small groups on clearly defined tasks designed to teach reading comprehension strategies (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

ESL. English as a Second Language.

ESOL. English for Speakers of Other Languages.

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH. Experimental reading instruction research includes studies that (1) objectively compare groups of learners receiving different forms of reading instruction and (2) use statistical procedures to help determine how likely it is that one approach is significantly different from another. These studies are designed to increase our confidence in drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of a particular approach to instruction.

FAMILY LITERACY. A literacy program that provides adults with instruction "on how to foster literacy in their children or other young relatives." The program may also provide direct literacy instruction for children and/or adults, and may involve classes where adults and children are working together (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

FLUENCY. Fluency in reading is the ability to read with speed and ease. When readers are fluent, they read accurately, without making mistakes in pronunciation, with appropriate rate, intonation, and rhythm.

GE. See **GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORE.**

GED. General Educational Development.

GED TESTS. Tests of General Educational Development.

GENERAL FUNCTIONAL LITERACY. A specific goal in some literacy programs. A functionally literate adult is able to perform all of the reading, writing, and computing (math) necessary to carry out everyday tasks. Some examples of everyday tasks include reading product labels while shopping, reading transportation timetables,

reading letters from federal, state, and local agencies, writing a check, and using an ATM machine.

GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORE OR GE. A test score that is used to convert raw scores on a test (the number of correct answers, for example) into something more meaningful. It represents the grade placement for which the raw score is average. A GE of 6, for example, means that the score received is an average score for someone in the 6th grade. Grade Equivalent Scores need to be interpreted carefully because they are, in most cases, estimates. Different test publishers may use different procedures to estimate GE scores. A GE may also be based on the readability score of a passage of text. Readability scores are derived from formulas that are used to estimate how difficult a passage is. For example, a readability score may be based on the difficulty of individual words and how complex the sentences in the passage are. These scores are often expressed in terms of grade equivalents. A passage with a readability score of GE 6, for example, would be a passage that students in a sixth grade classroom could read and understand. On some assessments, such as Informal Reading Inventories, if a student is able to read a passage with a readability score of GE 6, they are given a score of 6 for the passage.

GRAPHEME. Letters or groups of letters in an alphabet used to represents the phonemes (basic sounds) in a language.

GRAPHIC AND SEMANTIC ORGANIZERS. A reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers represent graphically (write or draw) the ideas and the relationships between ideas they find in a text (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

GUIDED ORAL READING. An instructional technique where students read text aloud and an instructor or helper (such as a peer tutor) provides feedback on the students reading. Feedback might include, for example, help in pronouncing difficult words, help with the meanings of difficult words, information about long it took to read a passage and how fluency might be increased, or help in applying reading comprehension strategies.

INFERENTIAL READING COMPREHENSION. Inferential comprehension is the ability to draw valid inferences from the ideas or information presented in a text. It is constructive in the sense that ideas from a text are combined with ideas in our memory in order to create ideas that are not in the text. We cannot answer an inferential reading comprehension question simply by looking back in the text.

LD. Learning Disability.

LEARNER PROFILE. See **ASSESSMENT PROFILE.**

LEARNING DISABILITY. A severe difficulty in learning to read, write, or compute. Those with learning disability have a significant discrepancy between what is expected of them given their general level of cognitive ability and their actual reading, writing, or mathematical ability or achievement. They may also have significant listening or speaking difficulties. Their difficulty is not due to mental retardation, social or emotional problems, sensory impairment (such as severe vision problems), or environmental factors (such as poor schooling).[*]

LITERAL READING COMPREHENSION. Literal comprehension is the ability to recall specific ideas or pieces of information from a text that has been read, or to make very simple inferences from this information.

LISTENING VOCABULARY. Words we understand or know the meanings of and use as we listen to others.

MORPHOLOGY. The study of the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compounding to form words.

NALS. National Adult Literacy Survey.

NCSALL. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

NIFL. National Institute For Literacy.

NONSENSE WORD. A nonsense word, like a psuedoword, conforms to the rules of English spelling but is not a real word. *Clat*, for example, can be pronounced because it conforms to the rules of English, but is nevertheless not a word. *Tqbl*, on the other hand is just a random sequence of letters that both cannot be pronounced and is not a word.

NRC. National Research Council of the National Academy of Science.

NREI. National Reading Excellence Initiative.

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[*] Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994, p. 16.).

NRP. National Reading Panel.

ORAL READING. Reading passages or other text aloud, usually as a teacher listens. See **GUIDED ORAL READING.**

ORAL VOCABULARY. Words we know the meanings of and use as we listen and speak.

PA. Phonemic Awareness.

PERCENTILE RANK. A test score that is used to convert raw scores (number of correct answers) into something more meaningful. Percentile rank is the percentage of test takers who had a raw score that was the same as or higher than a given score. If a student received a raw score of 15 on a test and this put the student in the 75th percentile, it would mean that the student had a higher score than 75% of those who take the test.

PHONEME. The smallest unit of sound in a language. The spoken word *cat*, for example, has three phonemes (the sounds represented by the letters *c*, *a*, and *t*). A phoneme may be represented by single letters, or groups of letters. The word *back* has four phonemes, the sounds represented by the individual letters *b*, *a*, *c*, and the two-letter combination *ck*).

PHONEME AWARENESS. An awareness that spoken language is made up of discrete units, the smallest of which is a phoneme. It refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words.

PHONEME DELETION. Deleting a sound from a word or nonsense word. For example, deleting the first consonant sound from the word bat leaves the word at.

PHONEME CLASSIFICATION. The ability in an assessment of phoneme awareness to classify two sounds (phonemes) as the same or different. For example, the beginning sounds for the words *bat* and *bip* are the same, the middle vowels are different, and the ending consonants are different.

PHONEME REVERSAL. The ability in an assessment of phoneme awareness to reverse phonemes. A three-phoneme word or nonword is heard, for example, and the student repeats it backwards. Examples: Hears *pat*, says *tap*; hears *pit* says *tip*; hears *pin* says *nip.*

PHONEME SEGMENTATION. The ability, in an assessment of phoneme awareness, to indicate the number of individual phonemes or sounds in a word. One method, for example, asks readers to put down a chip for each sound that they hear in a word or nonword. If *hat* were

pronounced, three chips would be put down. *Bunt* would have four sounds (and four chips).

PHONICS. Teaching students how to use grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) correspondences to decode or spell words. Knowing how the letters *t, b,* and *oa* can be pronounced, a student can blend them together to decode the word *b-oa-t*.

PHONOGRAM. A letter-sound combination that includes more than one grapheme or phoneme. Examples of common phonograms are *ole* (in *hole, mole, role*) and *ake* (as in *make, bake, lake*). Another term sometimes used for phonograms is word family.

PSEUDOWORD. A word that conforms to the rules of English spelling but is not a real word. *Clat,* for example, can be pronounced because it conforms to the rules of English, but is nevertheless not a word. *Tqbl,* on the other hand, is just a random sequence of letters that both cannot be pronounced and is not a word. Also called a **NONSENSE WORD.**

QUESTION ASKING. See **QUESTION GENERATION.**

QUESTION ANSWERING. A reading comprehension teaching strategy used to help students understand a text that is being read. "The reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback on the correctness." Focuses on the content of a passage (looking back to find answers) or on inferences that can be drawn from the passage (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

QUESTION GENERATION. A reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers ask themselves "what, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions" (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

RATE. See **READING RATE.**

REA. Reading Excellence Act.

READING ACCURACY. How well a reader can pronounce words while reading text. Accuracy is usually measured as the number or percentage of words read correctly. Accuracy is one aspect of fluency.

READING ASSESSMENT PROFILE. A list of a student's assessment or test results for several aspects of the reading process: alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and/or comprehension. Profiles highlight students' relative strengths and needs in reading.

READING COMPREHENSION. Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text. Comprehension is a "construction process" because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together as a text is read to create a representation of the text in the reader's mind.

READING DISABILITY. Traditionally, those whose reading achievement is significantly below what is expected for their age or grade level. One form of a learning disability, in which individuals of at least average cognitive ability nevertheless have a significant reading, computing, writing, speaking, or listening difficulty.

READING RATE. The speed at which someone reads text. Reading rate is usually measure as the number of words read per minute (words per minute).

REPEATED GUIDED ORAL READING. A teaching technique used to increase reading fluency. Students "read and reread a text over and over. This repeated reading usually is done some number of times or until a pre-specified level of proficiency has been reached." Repeated reading procedures also "increase the amount of oral reading practice that is available through the use of one-to-one instruction, tutors, audiotapes, peer guidance, or other means." Teachers provide guidance during repeated readings by helping a student pronounce difficult words, alerting a student to punctuation that shows readers where to pause, giving a student information about their reading rate or speed (how fast they read the passage), giving a student information about their reading accuracy (how many words they read correctly), modeling fluent reading for a student, or reading the passage along with a student (NRP, pp. 3-20).

REPEATED READING. See **REPEATED GUIDED ORAL READING.**

RRWG. Reading Research Working Group.

SIGHT WORD. Words that are recognized "on sight" without having to be sounded out, or words that are taught as whole words because they are irregular or unusual, as opposed to being learned through phonics.

SPEAKING VOCABULARY. Words we understand or know the meanings of and use as we speak.

STORY STRUCTURE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY. A reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a story that is being read. Readers use the common or universal structure of a story to ask who, where, what, when, and why questions about the story

characters and plot. Readers also might map out the time line, characters, and events in stories (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS. Structural analysis "involves the identification of roots, affixes, compounds, hyphenated forms, inflected and derived endings, contractions, and, in some cases syllabication." It is "sometimes used as an aid to pronunciation or in combination with phonic analysis in word-analysis programs" (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

SUMMARIZATION. A reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. "The reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meanings of a text into a coherent whole." Working with paragraphs, readers identify what is trivial, what is important, and what the topic of a paragraph is. Passages with multiple paragraphs can be summarized by creating summaries for individual paragraphs and then summarizing these summaries (NRP, pp. 4-6, 4-69).

VOCABULARY. Vocabulary is a term used to refer to all of the words in a language. One person's vocabulary consists of all the words the person understands or knows the meaning. "Vocabulary words" in reading instruction are usually those words that a person is studying in order to learn their meanings.

WA. Word Analysis.

WORD ANALYSIS. Includes phonics as well as other methods for decoding or spelling words, such as sight word recognition, use of context cues, dictionary skills, and morphology (the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compounding to form words).

WORKPLACE LITERACY. An adult literacy program that provides instruction on work-related reading, writing, or math abilities. Literacy instruction may take place at the workplace, or it may take place in a non-work setting while using work-oriented instructional material or focusing on work-oriented reading tasks (reading manuals, completing employment forms, reading and writing memos, and so on).

Techniques for Teaching Beginning–Level Reading to Adults

Hager, A. (2001). Techniques for teaching beginning-level reading to adults. *Focus on Basics, 5*(A), 1, 3–6.

I have been teaching beginning-level reading (equivalent to grade 0–2) at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA, for the past eight years. The majority of students in my class have either suspected or diagnosed reading disabilities (dyslexia). The difficulty they experience learning to read is as severe as the urgency they feel about mastering the task. One of my students, a former Olympic athlete, had to turn down a job offer as a track coach because of his inability to read the workout descriptions. He describes his life as "an ice cream that he is unable to lick."

Little research is available on the most effective methods for teaching reading to beginning-level adults. My continuing challenge has been to determine how reading acquisition research conducted with children can be applied to teaching reading to adults. In this article, I describe the techniques I have found most useful; I hope other teachers working with beginning readers will find them helpful.

OUR CLASS

This year our class includes nine students: six men and three women. Three are from the United States, five are from the Caribbean, and one is from Ethiopia. Their ages range from late 20s to late 50s and all are employed. Their educational experiences range from completing four to 12 years of school; one student has a high school diploma. One student has documented learning disabilities (LD). Students typically enter my class knowing little more than the names of the letters and a handful of letter sounds. They are usually only able to write their name and, in most cases, the letters of the alphabet. However, one student had never held a pencil before he entered my class.

Our class meets two evenings a week for three hours each evening. Because skilled reading depends on the mastery of specific subskills, I find it helpful to teach these explicitly. I organize the class into blocks of time in which, with the help of two volunteers, I directly teach eight components of reading: phonological awareness, word analysis, sight word recognition, spelling, oral reading for accuracy, oral reading for fluency, listening comprehension, and writing. These

components embody the skills and strategies that successful readers have mastered, either consciously or unconsciously. My curriculum also includes an intensive writing component.

TYPICAL LESSON PLAN FOR A THREE-HOUR CLASS	
Component	Time (min.)
Phonological Awareness	10
Word Analysis	20
Word Recognition "Sight Words"	10
Spelling	20
BREAK	10
Oral Reading (Accuracy)	20
Oral Reading (Fluency)	35
Comprehension	25
Writing	30

Over the last 30 years, a significant amount of research has compared the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching beginning reading to children. It consistently concludes that approaches that include a systematically organized and explicitly taught program of phonics result in significantly better word recognition, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension (Chall, 1967; Curtis, 1980; Stanovich 1986; Adams, 1990; Snow et al., 1998). For this reason, I directly teach the structure of the English language using a phonics-based approach.

I draw from a number of phonics-based reading programs, including the Wilson Reading System, the Orton-Gillingham System, and the Lindamood-Phoneme Sequencing Program (LiPS). The Wilson Reading System is a multisensory, phonics-based program developed specifically for adults. Unlike phonics-based programs for children, the Wilson system is organized around the six syllable types, which enables even beginning level adults to read works with somewhat sophisticated vocabulary (see the box on page 84 for the six syllable types). The Orton-Gillingham program is a phonics-based program similar to the Wilson Reading System but designed for dyslexic children. Students learn about syllables much later in the program. I find particularly helpful the Orton-Gillingham technique for learning phonetically irregular sight words. The LiPS Program is useful for helping students acquire an awareness of individual sounds in words. This ability, referred to as phonemic awareness, is a prerequisite for reading and spelling.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness, which involves the ability to differentiate and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in words, is the strongest predictor of future reading success for children (Adams, 1995). No research exists that describes the affects of phonological awareness on reading for adults. However, I have found that teaching phonological awareness to my beginning-reading adults significantly improves their reading accuracy and spelling, especially for reading and spelling words with blends.

Three phonological tasks that I use with my students, in order of difficulty, are auditory blending, auditory segmenting, and phonemic manipulation. Auditory blending involves asking students to blend words that the teacher presents in segmented form. For example, I say "/s/-/p/-/l/-/a/-/sh/" and the students responds with "/splash/." Auditory segmenting is exactly the opposite. I present the word "/sprint/" and the student must segment the word into its individual sounds "/s/-/p/-/r/-/i/-/n/-/t/." Phonemic manipulation, which is the strongest predictor of reading acquisition, is also the most difficult. The student must recognize that individual phonemes may be added, deleted, or moved around in words.

The following exchange is an example of a phonemic manipulation task. I ask the student to repeat a word such as "bland." Then I ask the student to say the word again, changing one of the phonemes. For example, "Say it again without the "/l/." The student responds with "/band/." While phonological awareness does not include the student's ability to associate sounds with letter symbols, and tasks are presented orally, the research concludes that the most effective way to promote phonemic awareness is in conjunction with the teaching of sound-to-symbol relationships (Torgesen, 1998).

WORD ANALYSIS

Word analysis, or phonics, involves teaching the alphabetic principle: learning that the graphic letter symbols in our alphabet correspond to speech sounds, and that these symbols and sounds can be blended together to form real words. Word analysis strategies enable students to "sound out" words they are unable to recognize by sight. Explicit, direct instruction in phonics has been proven to support beginning reading and spelling growth better than opportunistic attention to phonics while

reading, especially for students with suspected reading disabilities (Blackman et al., 1984; Chall, 1967, 1983). Beginning readers should be encouraged to decode unfamiliar words as opposed to reading them by sight, because it requires attention to every letter in sequence from left to right. This helps to fix the letter patterns in the word in a reader's memory. Eventually, these patterns are recognized instantaneously and words appear to be recognized holistically (Ehri, 1992; Adams, 1990).

I use the Wilson Reading System to teach phonics because the six syllable types are introduced early on. This enables even beginning-level

SYLLABLE TYPES	
Syllable Type	**Description**
Closed Syllable (vc/cv)	– one vowel per syllable – ends with one or more consonants – the vowel has a short sound *example:* pit, bath, splash, mitten
Vowel-Consonant-e Syllable (vce)	– one vowel, then a consonant, then an *e* – the first vowel has a long sound – the *e* is silent *example:* hope, mine, bedtime
Open Syllable (v/cv), (vc/v)	– one vowel – ends with the vowel – vowel has a long sound *example:* me, so, flu, why
R-Controlled Syllable	– one vowel, followed by an r – vowel sound is neither short or long – vowel sound is controlled by the r – /ar/ as in "car," /or/ as in "Ford," / er/, /ir/, /ur/ all sound alike as in "her," "bird," "church"
The Consonant-LE Syllable	– has three letters: a consonant, an "l," and an "e" – the e is silent – the consonant and the "l" are blended together *example:* little, grumble, table
The Double-Vowel Syllable	– two vowels side-by-side making one sound – usually the first vowel is long, and the second is silent *example:* maid, may, leaf, seen, pie, goat

Credit: Wilson Reading System

adults to read words that are part of their oral vocabulary and overall cognitive abilities. After learning the closed syllable rule, for example, students are able to read three-syllable words such as "Wisconsin,"

Readings Assigned for Session Two

"fantastic," and "Atlantic." Reading multisyllabic words provides my students, who have acquired a history of reading failure, with an unexpected sense of accomplishment and opens possibilities for them. Recognizing syllable types is important because the syllable pattern determines the sound of the vowel and how the word must be pronounced.

I have found that the Wilson Reading System Sound Tapping technique is a particularly effective way to teach decoding. In this technique, each sound in a word is represented by one tap. Students tap the first sound with their index finger and thumb, the second sound with their middle finger and thumb, the third sound with their ring finger and thumb, etc. If the student runs out of fingers, he or she returns to the index finger. Digraphs—two letters that make one sound (/sh/, /ch/, /th/, /ck/, /ph/)— are represented with one tap. Example: bed = 3 sounds, 3 taps; shed = 3 sounds, 3 taps; stint = 5 sounds, 5 taps. This technique helps students to hear all the sounds in a word.

"SIGHT WORD" RECOGNITION

Since many of the words that appear most frequently in print are phonetically irregular, even beginning readers must learn to recognize some words by sight. Students with reading disabilities have typically relied almost entirely on their ability to memorize words. In most cases, however, their strategies for remembering the way words look in print have proved ineffective. I have experienced some success in teaching sight words using the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic-Tactile (V-A-K-T) method that is part of the Orton-Gillingham program. The VAKT method, which emphasizes memorization through visualization, involves asking the student to say the name of each letter in a word and to trace each letter with his or her finger in the air before covering the word and attempting to spell it on paper. The VAKT method may be used to help students with both the reading and spelling of phonetically irregular words. To avoid unnecessary frustration, it is best to tell beginning readers which words they should decode and which words they must recognize by sight.

SPELLING

Spelling is an effective way to reinforce both word analysis skills and automatic word recognition. Research consistently indicates that fluent, skilled readers (both children and adults) make use of spelling patterns when they read and, conversely, reading itself reinforces a knowledge of spelling patterns (Adams, 1995). Spelling for practicing word analysis skills and spelling for promoting word recognition (usually of

phonetically irregular words), however, involve different tasks and call for different teaching techniques. The VAKT method, described earlier, is a process for teaching students how to spell phonetically irregular words. When dictating phonetically regular words, include only those words that include letter sounds and spelling rules that have been taught directly.

An especially effective technique for the spelling of phonetically regular words is the LiPS technique. This involves asking students to put down a poker chip for each sound they hear. After identifying the correct number of sounds in the word, students locate the vowel sound and place a different-colored chip over the chip that represents the vowel sound. Only after they have identified the sounds and isolated the vowel sound are students asked to select the letter symbols that represent the sounds in the word. This places a lighter burden on short-term and working memory.

For beginning-level readers who are native speakers of English, it is important to include nonsense words as part of dictation practice. Nonsense words require the student to use word attack strategies as opposed to sight recognition.

ORAL READING

Oral reading builds accuracy and fluency, both of which contribute to improved reading comprehension. It is also the most practical way for me to monitor a student's progress. It gives a student an opportunity to practice applying word attack and word recognition skills in context. Because reading for fluency and reading for accuracy involve different objectives and require different materials, I find it useful to teach and evaluate them as two separate activities.

Oral reading for accuracy gives students an opportunity to use the word analysis skills they have been taught directly, so I choose reading selections from controlled texts. During accuracy reading, the emphasis is on using word analysis knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. The goal of fluency reading, on the other hand, is to encourage students to read smoothly and with expression. When asking my students to do fluency reading, I do not interrupt the flow of the reading to discuss the content of the text or to analyze a particular spelling pattern. If the student makes a mistake, I provide the word. Because it is difficult to find materials that are easy enough for a beginning reader to read fluently, I often address fluency in the context of rereading material students have first read for accuracy. The Wilson Reading System describes a technique for promoting fluency called penciling that I have

Readings Assigned for Session Two

found particularly useful. I encourage the student to read more than one word in a breath by scooping a series of words together with a pencil. First, I model how the sentence should be read. For example: "The man with the hat   is big." Eventually, students are able to pencil the sentences for themselves but, at the beginning, I scoop words into phrases for them.

When working on oral reading for either accuracy or fluency, I divide the class up according to ability. I assign my teaching volunteers to work with the higher-level groups. Periodically, I pair stronger readers to act as student teachers with their less skilled classmates.

Before being paired with a less skilled reader, however, student teachers receive explicit instruction in providing decoding clues and handling errors. I find this activity effective for two reasons. First, by teaching someone else, the more skilled student teachers consolidate their own knowledge and become cognizant of their own relative progress. Second, the more-skilled readers become a source of inspiration and support for the less-skilled readers in the class.

COMPREHENSION

For readers at the 0–3rd grade level, I teach higher-level comprehension skills using materials other than those the students can read themselves. In my class, critical thinking usually takes place in the context of a classroom debate. Topics I have found particularly conducive to a heated discussion include "Why do you think it is or is not appropriate to hit your children when they misbehave?" and "Why do you think there is so much crime in this country?"

Using photographs is also effective in building higher-level comprehension skills. I ask questions such as "What do you think the people in the photograph are feeling?" "How can you tell?" or "What do you think may have happened to make them feel that way?" Open-ended questions encourage students to make inferences, draw conclusions, and express opinions.

CONCLUSION

Progress can be excruciatingly slow for beginning-level adult readers. The volunteers who work in my class are struck by the lack of novelty in my classes. Each class follows the same routine (see the Typical Lesson Plan) and a significant amount of class time is spent reviewing previously taught skills and rereading texts. For beginning-level readers, and especially for those with reading disabilities, a predictable routine helps

to alleviate anxiety. Students get upset when the class does not follow its expected course. The volunteers are also surprised that students do not feel insulted or embarrassed working with the letters of the alphabet and reading texts that may appear babyish. On the contrary, after years of only using a hit or miss approach, my students are extremely relieved to discover that reading involves patterns of letters with predictable sounds.

One student describes his early experience with reading: "When I was in grade school, I would listen to the other kids read aloud and I had no idea how they knew that those letters said those words. When it was my turn, all I could do was guess. Now it makes sense! It's like I found the key."

The challenge of teaching reading to beginning-level adults can be daunting. In my opinion, however, teaching at the beginning level is also the most rewarding. It is extremely moving to witness an adult who, after years of struggling with the sounds of individual letters, is able to read a letter from a family member or a note that his or her child brings home from school.

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EFF HOTtopics

STRATEGIES
AND TOOLS
FOR TEACHING
WITH EFF

FALL 2003

VOL. 3/NO. 1

Read With Understanding

In this issue we focus on the EFF Standard *Read With Understanding* and research-based instructional practices that will help students reach their goals. Many articles in this issue are based on work carried out as part of the EFF Reading Project, a two-year partnership between the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for Family Literacy integrating research on the teaching of reading into EFF's purposeful and contextual approach to instruction.

This issue of HOT Topics is about one of the **hottest topics** *in education today— reading.*

The EFF approach to teaching and learning embeds researched-based reading instruction in the broader context of a standards-based approach to adult education. This approach is also based on solid research about how standards improve instruction and accountability. Standards make the goals and content of teaching and learning activities transparent to the teachers and students and make clear what knowledge and skills should be the focus

Equipped for the future

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY

In order to fulfill responsibilities as parents/family members, citizens/community members, and workers, adults must be able to:

STANDARD

Read With Understanding

- Determine the reading purpose.
- Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.
- Monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.
- Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.
- Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.

ACCESS · VOICE · INDEPENDENT ACTION · BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Family · Worker · Citizen
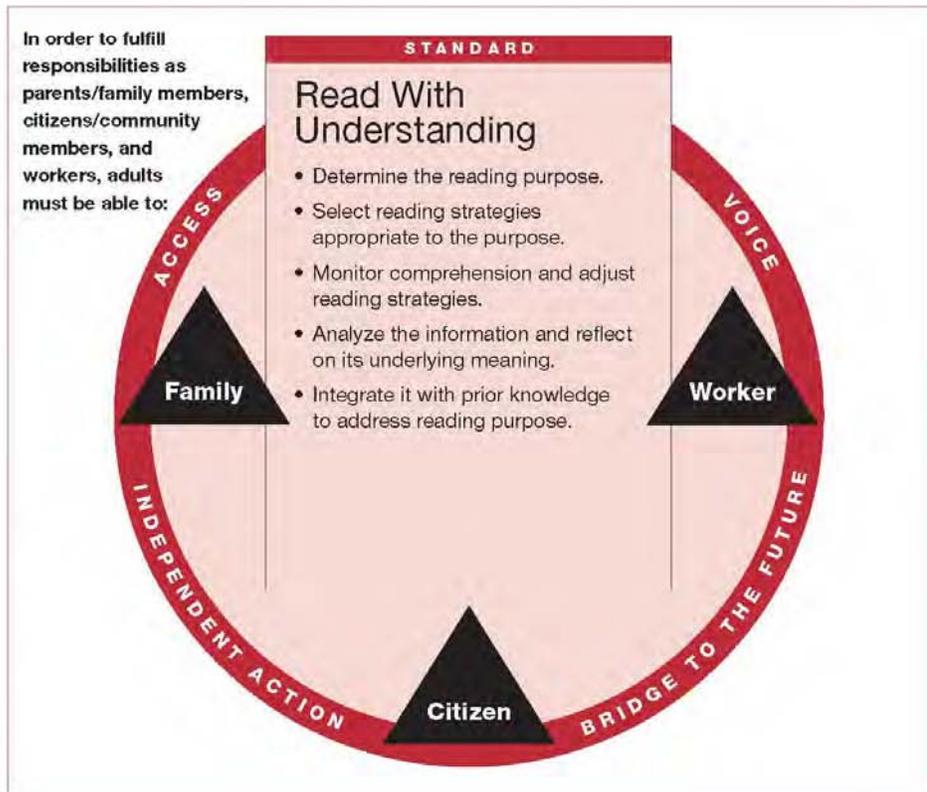
Read With Understanding,

of instruction and assessment. The EFF Standard *Read With Understanding* is one of sixteen EFF Standards that define the core knowledge and skills that adults need in their roles as family members, community members and workers.

Teachers want to learn and use the most valid instructional practices available that will result in higher levels of student achievement. In the first article, Amy Trawick introduces the key research on reading instruction and explains how the EFF Standard *Read With Understanding* frames the four elements of evidence-based instruction. The issue also includes practical application strategies and models for teaching and learning used in the ten programs that participated in the EFF Reading Project as well as an article by Marilyn Gillespie on teaching reading to ESL students.

The article "Using the EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle to Plan Reading Instruction" describes how two teachers used the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle to plan and carry out standards-based instruction focusing on *Read With Understanding*.

One of the ways that standards-based instruction improves instruction is by integrating assessment at every step of the teaching/learning cycle. The article "RWU Assessment Prototype" is a brief update on the development of assessment tools for the EFF Standards. The *Read With Understanding* assessments, developed as the prototype for accountability assessments for all the EFF standards, complete the circle of goals, instructional practices, assessment, and accountability needed for standards-based educational improvement. ●

The EFF/NCFL Reading Project

Equipped for the Future and the National Center for Family Literacy received funding from the Partnership for Reading to develop materials and a professional development process aimed at helping teachers and administrators learn how to use research-based reading instruction to support adult students in learning to read more effectively. Teachers and administrators from ten program teams participated in piloting the training curriculum. They took part in three training sessions, received technical assistance between sessions, and designed and implemented a series of lessons integrating researched-based reading instruction into an EFF teaching/learning approach.

The programs that took part in the project:

FACE Programs at the Blackwater Community School, Coolidge, Arizona; the Chi Chi'l Tah/Jones Ranch Community School, Vanderwagon, New Mexico; the Crownpoint Community School, Crownpoint, New Mexico; the Little Singer Community School, Winslow, Arizona; and the Rough Rock Community School, Chinle, Arizona. The Groves Adult High School Even Start, Middletown, Delaware; Susanna Wesley Even Start, East Prairie, Missouri; Easton Even Start, ProJeCt of Easton, Incorporated, Easton, Pennsylvania; Southwest Corner Even Start, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania; and Norfolk Even Start, Norfolk, Virginia.

Read With Understanding:
Up Close and Personal

by Amy R. Trawick

Over the past two years more and more adult and family literacy teachers have become aware of what gets talked about as "the reading research"—that body of evidence that supports particular reading instructional practices in the areas of alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In developing the materials for the EFF Reading Project, our goal was to integrate these findings about effective reading instruction into the EFF approach to teaching and learning. This article explores the connections we made between the EFF Standard *Read with Understanding* and the reading research—and how teachers and programs can use this information to support students in reading to accomplish important purposes in their lives.

Connecting Reading Research to RWU

Read With Understanding (RWU) is one of 16 EFF applied learning standards. Like the other fifteen EFF Standards, RWU is conceptualized as an integrated skill process that adults use to accomplish goals and purposes in their lives. The components of the *Read With Understanding* Standard (see page 1), describe a process that skilled readers engage in as they make sense of the symbols on a page. The first component states that the reader determines the reading purpose; however, a reader does not necessarily carry out the remaining components in sequential, discrete steps. Rather, the components are integrated as the reader draws on sets of underlying skills in order to read with understanding to accomplish his or her purposes.

Recent reports that review and synthesize research on reading instruction have

helped EFF to identify the underlying skills that readers integrate during the reading process. The report *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction* (Kruidenier, 2002) discusses "emerging principles" from the relatively small base of adult reading instruction and supports these with findings from *Teaching Children to Read* (National Reading Panel, 2000), a report on K-12 reading instruction based on a much larger body of research. The reports organize these instructional principles around four elements: alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. As the EFF Reading Project studied these four elements, it became clear that they could be thought of as sets of *knowledge, skills,* and *strategies.*

Knowledge refers to what the reader knows about each reading element. For instance, in alphabetics, the skilled reader knows that written spellings usually systematically represent the sounds of spoken words. This knowledge can be used when trying to figure out, or decode, unknown words. In the area of comprehension, knowledge consists of such things as knowing that readers read for a purpose and that reading can break down and require specific "fix-up" strategies.

Skills refers to what the reader can do with that knowledge as he or she reads. For example, in the area of alphabetics, it is helpful to have knowledge that *b* says /b/, *a* might say /a/, and *t* says /t/; it is even more useful for reading purposes to be able to apply this knowledge in the skill of decoding when one encounters the word *bat.* In the area of comprehension, the reader must have the skill of determining a purpose for reading. Similarly, a skilled reader knows how and when to monitor comprehension.

Strategies refers to intentional ways that readers perform skills. For example, Joe, a novice reader, sees the sentence, "The bat hit the ball with a smack" and gets stuck at the word *bat* (a skill). He decides to try to decode the word by ap-

The Four Elements

The Reading Research Working Group, sponsored by a collaboration between the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, evaluated the research related to four elements (which the reports calls components) that should be included in reading instruction offered in adult basic education classes. For more information go to www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/adult_reading/adult_reading.html The following definitions come from this website.

Four Elements to Include in Reading Instruction	Reading Research Working Group Defines Four Elements
Alphabetics *Phonemic Awareness and Word Analysis*	The whole process of using the written letters in an alphabet to represent meaningful, spoken words is called alphabetics.
	Alphabetics includes both phonemic awareness (PA) and word analysis (WA). Students with good PA know how to manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken English…. Students with good WA know how individual letters and combinations of letters are used to represent the sounds of spoken English.
Fluency	Fluency is the ability to read with speed and ease. When readers are fluent, they read accurately, without making mistakes in pronunciation, and with appropriate speed and rhythm.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is a term used to refer to all of the words in a language. Our own vocabulary consists of the individual words we understand or know the meanings of.
Comprehension	Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text.

plying one of several possible strategies. He might try segmenting the word into individual sounds--/b/+/a/+/t/. Or, he might decide to look for a word he knows inside the larger word. To decode *bat,* then, he might find the word *at,* put a /b/ in front of it—/b/+/at/—and come up with *bat.* He might use another strategy, comparing the unknown word to a full word he knows—*cat*—substituting a /b/ for the /k/. Any of these strategies might be used for accomplishing the skill of decoding.

More complex strategies aid the reader in using comprehension skills. Susan has a variety of strategies that will

help her determine the main idea and supporting details of a text (a skill). She might first look for headings or numbered sections, knowing that authors often try to mark their main points. She might read the first sentence or paragraph in a section and compare following sentences or sections to the first to see if it captures an idea bigger than the others. She could draw a graphic organizer to help her see the relationships. Or, she might use different colored highlighters and write notes in the margin as she works out her hypothesis and keeps track of her thinking. Again, each of these

The Reader's Tool Chest

Knowledge, Skills, and Strategies Used Flexibly and in Combination to Read With Understanding

Read With Understanding

- Determine the reading purpose.
- Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.
- Monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.
- Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.
- Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.

ALPHABETICS

FLUENCY

Understanding of Key Words | Strategies for Figuring Out Meaning

VOCABULARY

COMPREHENSION
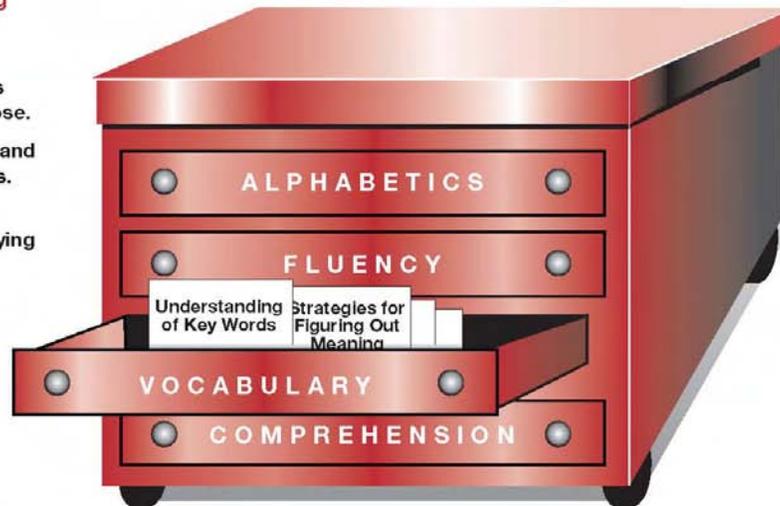
Up Close and Personal, continued from page 3

strategies, applied appropriately, can help her accomplish the skill of finding the main idea and supporting details.

This scheme of knowledge, skills, and strategies outlined for alphabetics and comprehension can also be applied to fluency and vocabulary, the other two elements named specifically in the reviews of reading research.

Expert Performance of RWU

Consider how a skilled reader approaches the reading process. We might think about this process as choosing tools from a reading toolbox. Necessarily, the toolbox is large, and it contains a variety of knowledge, skills and strategies. Each one is useful in certain situations, and the skilled reader knows when and how to use them.

What does this toolbox look like? Re-

search on how people develop expertise tells us that the knowledge base of experts is not only broad but also organized for efficient retrieval. So instead of a hodge-podge of tools thrown willy-nilly into a box, we want to be sure that we envision an organized toolbox for our skilled reader, maybe even a tool *chest* with drawers representing key sets of knowledge, skills and strategies. Because these drawers are organized, the skilled reader has easy access and can accomplish a wide range of tasks in a wide range of situations. In fact, a skilled reader chooses wisely among these tools, using them flexibly and in combination, as she works through each of the components that make up the integrated skill process *Read With Understanding*.

For example, as a reader monitors her comprehension (the third RWU compo-

nent), she may realize that something in the passage doesn't make sense. She may then zero in on certain words that she thinks she might have mis-read, applying appropriate tools from her alphabetics drawer. If she concludes that word recognition is not the issue, she might check her understanding of key words, borrowing from her vocabulary drawer. If the passage is especially difficult and she had originally read it very slowly, she might decide to re-read the passage more fluently (fluency drawer) and see if understanding flows more easily. Or, she might decide she needs a graphic organizer to help her make sense of the information (comprehension drawer).

The point is, that in the course of trying to read with understanding, this reader and other skilled readers pull from the tools they have available to them, choosing those that address the issue at

hand. A skilled reader is able to draw appropriate tools from the tool chest, knowing when and how to use them, because he has metacognitive abilities. Metacognition is the awareness of one's own thinking and the ability to monitor and regulate thinking to achieve cognitive goals. In designing instruction using the Standard *Read with Understanding*, teachers consider ways to support readers in regularly attending to their own understanding and making decisions about how to solve problems as they read.

Further Implications for Teaching

Research with students in adult basic education classes has shown that unlike skilled readers, who have equally developed sets of tools across all four elements, students in adult and family literacy programs are more likely to have strengths in some of the sets and gaps in others. Teachers should assess students' skills in order to identify their strengths and gaps, consider the implications for their ability to *Read With Understanding*, and focus instruction where needed.

The recent synthesis reports on reading instruction identified effective instructional practices that help readers build the sets of knowledge, skills, and strategies that are the focus of the EFF Reading Project. In general, the reports conclude that two approaches are essential for building expertise in reading: explicit instruction in knowledge, skills, and strategies and opportunities to use and practice these learnings in reading texts. In teaching *Read With Understanding*, teachers provide explicit instruction about these knowledge, skills, and strategies within the context of larger activities that engage students in reading material in pursuit of their role-based goals. Addressing these goal-related contexts provides the motivation for students to read, which in turn reinforces learning and facilitates further growth in each of the sets of knowledge, skills, and strategies.

Conclusion

What is clear from the data gathered by EFF in its assessment research is that adult readers at all levels of development draw on/work through all the components in the *Read With Understanding* Standard. However, the knowledge, skills, and strategies available to the novice reader are much more limited than those available to an expert reader. These differences frame the reader's access to both texts and tasks, and are perceptible on the performance continuum, which illustrates what performance looks like at different points in the process of building expertise in *Read With Understanding*. (See pages 12 and 13.)

The key to moving readers along the continuum toward expertise is effective instruction in the *Read With Understanding* Standard. This includes supporting students in building their tool chests of knowledge, skills, and strategies. It also requires giving students practice in choosing the right tool at the right time as they attempt to construct and apply meaning in reading activities grounded in topics and tasks that matter to them. ●

References:

Kruidenier, John (2002). *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction.* Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy, Partnership for Reading.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction* (Report of the Subgroups). Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.

For more information on the EFF Reading Project visit
http://www.nifl.gov/partnership forreading/family/eff/effrp.html

"The EFF Reading Project training made it possible for practitioners in family literacy programs to understand and to apply a standards-based approach to teaching reading with both children and adults, based on research. Teachers involved in the project, most of whom had little prior training in teaching reading, began to create learner profiles based on tools which were designed to assess learners' decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills in reading. Teachers began to employ the types of instructional strategies evidenced through research to be effective to address phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension with children and with adults. Teaching learners a variety of strategies, based on their particular area of need, has made a difference in learners' motivation and their reading progress."
—Susan Finn-Miller,
Professional Development Specialist
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

"The more parents and teachers understand the reading process, the better they are able to make decisions about their own and their children's learning."
—Nancy Sledd,
National Center for Family Literacy

Learning to Read in English

by Marilyn Gillespie

Learning to read is challenging for any adult, but especially so for adults who are also learning how to speak English. Unfortunately, very little research has been undertaken with this population of learners. This year the National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) completed a thorough review of what research has been undertaken with adult learners. In addition, they examined second language reading research undertaken with K-12 learners and provided key findings that are useful to practitioners working with adults. (Burt, Peyton & Adams, 2003). This article contains a summary of their findings.

ESL Literacy Learners are Diverse

The authors point out that adult ESL literacy is especially complex because adults come from such diverse backgrounds and have so many widely differing previous educational experiences. Since students are often placed in classrooms based on their oral proficiency in English, the literacy levels within a single ESL classroom may span from those with almost no literacy to those with college degrees or higher. In classrooms where ESL learners are grouped by literacy level, students' oral language abilities may range from beginner to advanced; the structures of their first language writing system may vary widely (such as between Spanish and Chinese); and, they may have quite different prior experiences with school.

Components of Second Language Reading Proficiency

NCLE's review suggests that first language reading ability is a less significant predictor of second language reading ability than is second language proficiency, especially among lower proficiency learners. They suggest four components of second language proficiency that are among the most important for teachers to take into account.

Vocabulary Knowledge. To improve vocabulary knowledge, and to provide students with many opportunities to read comprehensible texts, teachers can preview text-specific vocabulary with students before learners start to read. In addition, they can explicitly teach high-frequency vocabulary.

Syntactic Proficiency. Studies also show that students who understand the structures of English are better able to understand the underlying meaning of written texts. English language learners need to learn about the relationship between form and meaning and to identify cues that signal that connection (for example,

the use of the *-ed* to form an adjective, as in "a parked car"). This implies that teachers need to integrate grammar instruction with reading instruction and to use what students read as a context to examine and learn about grammatical structures. As students get better at syntactic processing, more mental space is freed up for understanding the larger meaning of a reading passage.

Phonological processing. Research shows that explicitly teaching the letter-sound correspondences in the English writing system through phonics instruction can improve English language reading ability. Teachers can use matching letters to sounds; matching morphemes (units that signal meaning, such as past tense markers), meanings and pronunciation; oral reading and choral reading to improve phonological processing.

Schema Activation. An important part of reading comprehension involves "reading between the lines" or using our background knowledge of the world to fill in what is not stated explicitly in a text. To help learners to build schema, teachers can provide background knowledge on a topic before beginning to read by selecting texts that build on ideas and concepts students are already familiar with. For unfamiliar themes they can use visual aides and other kinds of pre-reading activities such as having students brainstorm ideas about a topic and compare practices in their home countries and in the U.S. ●

Readings Assigned for Session Two

Teaching/Learning Toolkit

http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc

The new online EFF Teaching/Learning Toolkit provides practitioners with resources
to use the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle in adult education settings.

Examples | Tools | Steps | Standards | Support | Home

REFLECTION

PREPARATION

STEP 1. Determine individual learner's goals and purposes and identify the Standards that will help him/her achieve them. Identify student's prior knowledge about these goals and Standards.

STEP 8. Determine next steps to help learners meet their goals.

(Return to Step 1 and/or 2.)

STEP 7. Evaluate and reflect on how what was learned is transferable to real-life situations.

The EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle

STEP 2. In a group identify a shared interest, purpose, or goal and determine the group's prior knowledge of this topic. Identify the Standard that will help the group address this shared goal. Make clear the connection between the class focus and individual needs.

STEP 6. Observe and document evidence of performance of the Standard.

CARRYING

STEP 3. Design a learning activity to address the real-life concerns of the learners.

STEP 5. Carry out the learning activity.

OUT THE PLAN

STEP 4. Develop a plan to capture evidence and report learning.

PLANNING

ON-GOING PRACTICES

• Work with learners to continually revisit and revise their goals.

• Engage learners, throughout, in identifying and applying their prior experience and knowledge to their learning.

• Build in opportunities throughout the activity for learners to reflect on and monitor their own developing knowledge, skills, and learning strategies.

• Make sure throughout that learners clearly understand what they are learning and why.

• Adjust the learning activity to reflect emerging goals and learning needs.

Using the EFF Teaching and Learning Cycle to Plan Reading Instruction

Below is an illustration of how Cheryl Williams and Patricia Murchison, two teachers who participated in the EFF Reading Project, used the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle. Cheryl and Patricia teach in an Even Start Family Literacy Program in a large early childhood development center in Norfolk, Virginia. One day they heard a heated discussion among the parents they teach about junk food and healthy snacks for their children. Cheryl and Patricia recognized an opportunity to help these parents learn more about healthy snacks while improving their reading comprehension. The table below describes how they used the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle to plan and carry out this learning activity focused on improving reading comprehension in order to learn more about improving their children's eating habits. ●

Cycle Steps	Step-by-Step Activities
1. Determine individual learner's goals and purposes and identify the Standards that will help him/her achieve them. **Identify student's prior knowledge about these goals and Standards.**	Individual learners in the program identified their primary goals as: • passing the GED Exams • improving reading comprehension to understand work-related materials and information they receive from community agencies. All students identified the EFF Standard: *Read With Understanding* as a standard that would help them achieve these goals and self-assessed their ability to use the standard during intake. Students also took the TABE, and Cheryl reviewed the diagnostic information provided by the test. She also administered Independent Reading Inventories to some students to gain insight into the knowledge, skills, and strategies they were using.
2. In a group, identify a shared interest, purpose or goal and determine the group's prior knowledge of this topic. **Identify the Standard that will help the group address this shared goal. Make clear the connection between the class focus and individuals' needs.**	Cheryl led the class in discussing an issue they had with the snacks, which they and other parents were bringing in for the children at the Center. Students decided that their concern was reflected on the Parent/Family Member Role Map in the Broad Area of Responsibility: Meet Family Needs and Responsibilities. They wanted to find out how to make healthy snacks and to share this information with other parents. They knew that some of the material they found on this topic would be difficult to read, and they wanted to learn reading strategies that would enable them to build their skills so they could understand and learn from this more difficult material. The class decided to focus on the Standard *Read With Understanding* so that they could make progress on their larger goals as well. Cheryl's goal was to bring in a variety of reading materials at their instructional level, but text that would challenge them, as well. She was prepared to select from the EBRI (Evidence-Based Reading Instruction) strategies to accomplish this goal.
3. Design a learning activity to address the real-life concerns of the learner(s).	Students determined that they would read and discuss what was involved in making healthy snacks and getting children to eat them and then share this information with the other parents by making and putting up posters in the Center. Cheryl used the components of the standard RWU as a guide to planning instruction and then guided the students in: • formulating questions as a way of determining their purpose for reading • selecting reading materials: pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, food labels, books, and internet information • developing the knowledge, skills, and strategies in word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension processes to support the components of the RWU standard • reflecting on their strategy use.

Cycle Steps	Step-by-Step Activities
4. Develop a plan to capture evidence and report learning.	Cheryl planned to include opportunities for students to: • Read aloud to practice and assess fluency • Complete the *Read With Understanding Diary* to develop their metacognitive awareness of their own reading and to give her insight into strategies that were and were not working for them • Show their understanding of the content in the posters they created.
5. Carry out the learning activity.	Cheryl engaged students in a KWRL activity (see below) as a way for students to generate questions about the topic, and then students used these questions to determine their purposes for reading texts. She set aside a portion of each class to engage students in strategy lessons related to *Read With Understanding*. The focus of these strategy lessons was determined from her observations of students' progress. Lessons included skimming, using text features to locate information, and identifying main idea and details. Students then used (and, thus, practiced) these strategies in small groups as they read their self-selected articles. Cheryl also regularly led a lesson called "Unlocking Words" to support students in building word-level strategies.
6. Observe and document evidence of performance of the Standard.	Cheryl led the class in filling out their RWU Diaries and provided opportunities for completing the Diary on their own. She reviewed the Diaries, noting strengths and gaps in how students were performing Read With Understanding. These more structured assessments of student reading were supported by her own informal observations and note-taking. She used these assessments to inform her daily lessons. She also realized that students seemed to use the same strategies again and again, and she decided to introduce new strategies during the next T/L cycle.
7. Evaluate and reflect on how what was learned is transferable to real-life situations.	Students completed a written reflection at the end of each day and at the end of the cycle. During these reflections, they noted material they had read, evaluated its difficulty (for them), and wrote about changes they were noting in their reading. They also reflected on how they might use the reading strategies they were learning in other situations. Most students found connections with their work-related goals, and others described how these strategies would help them when they took the GED tests. Cheryl followed up with class discussions about these potential applications.
8. Determine next steps to help learners meet their goals. (Return to Step 1 and/or 2)	Students noted that they tended to resort to re-reading when their comprehension breaks down and wondered what else they could do. As they discussed developing a new shared priority, what effective discipline looks like, they wanted to continue to explore other "fix-up" strategies.

K-W-R-L   *Shared Priority:* Providing healthy snacks for children

What do I know?	What do I want to know?	What resources are available?	How will I show what I have learned?
Healthy snacks help children grow. Healthy snacks give them healthy teeth. Healthy snacks give them healthy skin. Some healthy snacks are: • Cheese/crackers • Raw vegetables • Fruits	Why should our kids eat healthy snacks? Effects of healthy snacks? How often? How much? What are healthy snacks? What are unhealthy snacks? How can I encourage kids to eat healthy snacks? What are the risks of not giving kids healthy snacks?	Nutrition books Parenting books/magazines WIC Pamphlets Internet Food labels School child nutritionist	Snack chart Memo – Providing healthy snacks Newsletter Workshop Bulletin Board Posters

The RWU Diary:
A Tool for Reflection and Assessment

During the EFF Reading Project, we developed two important tools for reading and reflection and assessment: *The Read with Understanding Diary* and *The Read with Understanding Guide.* We were looking for a way to assess use of the standard during actual reading, and we wanted something that could be used at any reading level by either teachers or students. Of more importance, we wanted a tool that would demonstrate the power of the *Read With Understanding* Standard.

Teachers may use the diary to take notes as they observe students reading. They can then ask questions as a way of getting more specific information about students' reading abilities and strategies. Informal conferences such as these provide forums for the question/answer/assessment process. For example, imagine that a student has read an article of specific interest to her:

- The teacher asks, "Why did you decide to read this section?" *The teacher is able to gain insights into the student's purpose for reading.*
- The teacher asks "Where have you read something new? Could you read that section to me?" *The teacher notes fluency and the strategies the student uses to figure out unknown or difficult words.*
- The teacher asks "Did anything you read give you trouble? Where did that happen? What gave you the difficulty? What did you do?" *The teacher is able to gain information about how well students monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.*

Over time, these informal conferences can help the teacher and student build a picture of the banks of strategies students are drawing from to Read With Understanding and then set new goals for reading improvement.

Teachers and students can use the RWU Diary/Guide in a number of other ways as well:

- The teacher can "prompt" strategy use by asking questions from the Guide.
- The students can refer to the Guide on their own when their comprehension breaks down.
- If the student has been working to develop a particular reading strategy, the teacher might suggest that he/she read a selection incorporating the strategy and use the Diary to record the experience.
- Students might use the Diary on their own, as they reflect on their use of components as they develop metacognitive awareness.
- Copies of completed diaries can be kept in student portfolios. Teacher and student can review them periodically to track strategy use and to see what kinds of insights the student is gaining into his/her reading. ●

READ WITH UNDERSTANDING DIARY

TEXT: _____   DATE _____

NAME: _____

Read With Understanding	What did you do? How did you do it?
• Determine the reading purpose.	
• Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.	
• Check comprehension and adjust reading strategies.	
• Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.	
• Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.	

READ WITH UNDERSTANDING GUIDE

TEXT: _____   DATE: _____

NAME: _____

Read With Understanding	What did you do? How did you do it?
• Determine the reading purpose.	▶ What is your general purpose in reading this text? ▶ What are some specific things you want to get out of this reading? TRY: Read the title and look at the pictures. What do you notice about the way the text looks? Are there headings? Turn the headings into questions. What are the questions you think this text will answer?
• Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.	▶ Should you read this text fast or slowly? ▶ How often will you stop to check your understanding? TRY: Every heading/page/chapter ▶ How will you keep up with the answers to your questions? TRY: Make a chart ▶ How often will you make new predictions/questions? TRY: Every heading/page/chapter ▶ What will you do if you come to word you don't know? TRY: Tips for Tackling Long Words
• Check comprehension and adjust reading strategies.	▶ Tune in to whether or not you are understanding as you read. TRY: Stop every paragraph or page and: • Cover the text and tell yourself what you read. • Answer any questions you wrote at the beginning. • Think of new questions for the next section. ▶ Use different strategies when you get stuck: TRY: Reread, break down words you don't know, use context clues, use the glossary or margin notes, look at pictures/charts on the page.
• Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.	▶ Can you summarize the main ideas from the readings? ▶ Can you make sense of the author's writing? TRY: Making a graphic organizer or text map to "see" the information in a different form.
• Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.	▶ Did you meet your general purpose? Your specific purpose? How do you know? TRY: Writing or telling someone what you learned or the answer to your pre-reading questions.

RWU Assessment Prototype

A Scenario

Several beginning ESL students in Mary's mixed level class in the local correctional facility are preparing for an end-of-instructional-cycle assessment that will let them know if they are ready to move to a more advanced reading level. For the past four weeks, they have focused on reading about family and community relationships, using material drawn from the newspaper and from students' family stories. Read with Understanding Level 2 (on page 13) and the EFF Teaching/Learning Cycle are the guides that Mary has used in developing her teaching plans. She developed learning activities and instruction that included multiple opportunities for students to assess their reading skills.

These 'instructionally-embedded' assessment activities mirror the type of performance assessment that students will take for accountability purposes. Students are used to documenting the evidence of their reading performance: they are comfortable using a tape recorder for oral reading; they are used to being observed as they use the reading strategies they have learned; and are familiar with using rubrics to rate their performance.

From the online EFF assessment task collection, Mary selects the most appropriate Level 2 Read With Understanding performance assessment for her students. She chooses an assessment task that can be administered to a small group of students, with individual oral reading. The task calls for students to read two simplified utility bills (one for telephone services and one for electricity), write simple one or two word responses to short questions, and respond rally to questions about the utility bills.

She administers the task to her students and scores their reading performance using a scoring rubric that accompanies the assessment. Because she periodically checks her scoring with another trained scorer and because she has kept up to date with training in scoring assessments, Mary is confident that her scores of 'proficient' for two students and 'advanced' for the third are valid and reliable.

She administers two more assessment tasks to these students. On the basis of the scores from the three tasks, all three students exit Level 2 and move to Level 3.

This assessment scenario is almost a reality. It is based on the experience of a teacher who piloted Level 2 Read With Understanding assessment tasks during the spring of 2003, one final step in the preparation of EFF Read With Understanding Assessment Tasks. The process and tools for using EFF reading performance tasks will be fully described in the EFF Read With Understanding Accountability Assessment Handbook, in production. The Guide will include:

- the full RWU Performance Continuum, a summary developmental description of six levels of performance on the Standard;
- "Use Scenarios," narrative descriptions of the implementation and use of the assessment tasks in a variety of state administrative, program, and classroom settings;
- sample model assessment tasks for the six EFF RWU Levels, with examples of learner performance;

- guidelines for developing instructionally-embedded assessments;
- guidelines for administering, scoring and reporting tasks for accountability purposes; and
- guidelines for training scorers.

The classroom scenarios will be similar to the one given above, giving more detail about the manner in which instructionally-embedded assessment tasks and accountability assessment tasks may be selected, administered, scored and reported to meet the particular needs of the learner and the instructional context.

The Guide will be available in early 2004 for use by state and program administrators. For more information, contact the EFF Assessment Consortium Co-Directors:

Regie Stites, Technical Director, regie.stites@sri.com or Brenda Bell, Field Research Director, bsbell@utk.edu. ●

EFF RWU LEVEL 2
At Level 2 Adults Are Able To:

1. Read With Understanding

- Determine the reading purpose.
- Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.
- Monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.
- Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.
- Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.

2. Use Key Knowledge, Skills, and Strategies

- Decode and recognize everyday, simple words in short, simple text by breaking words into parts, tapping out/sounding out syllables, applying pronunciation rules, using picture aids, and recalling oral vocabulary and sight words;
- Demonstrate familiarity with simple, everyday content knowledge and vocabulary;
- Monitor and enhance comprehension (using various strategies such as rereading, restating, copying and rephrasing text, making a list of new words, or using a simplified dictionary);
- Recall prior knowledge to assist in selecting texts and in understanding the information they contain.

3. Show Fluency, Independence, and Ability to Perform in a Range of Settings

- Read and comprehend words in small blocks of simple text slowly but easily and with few errors.
- Independently accomplish simple, well-defined, and structured reading activities in a range of comfortable and familiar settings.

4. Accomplish a Variety of Reading Purposes

- Accomplish a variety of goals, such as:
  - ✔ Reading aloud a picture book with very simple text to a young child.
  - ✔ Reading a short narrative about a community concerns in order to identify and think about one's own community issues.
  - ✔ Reading about entry-level job duties in order to decide whether or not to apply.
  - ✔ Reading simple greeting cards to choose an appropriate card for a friend.
  - ✔ Reading a simple chart about job benefits to figure out if hospitalization is covered.
  - ✔ Reading utility bills in order to understand how and when to pay them.
  - ✔ Reading short narratives about immigrant experiences to reflect on and learn about one's own heritage.
  - ✔ Reading the newspaper weather forecast to decide on appropriate clothes for a weekend trip.

Family and Child Education (FACE) Programs Participate With Purpose in the RWU Project

Teaching with the EFF Standard RWU includes creating a real world context for instruction by identifying shared priorities that provide a purpose for practicing reading, constructing meaningful learning activities that address that purpose, and identifying appropriate texts that support the purpose and student goals. These texts must also provide opportunities for students to use the Four Reading Elements: alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Participants in the FACE cohort of the EFF Reading Project drew on cultural, familial, and personal interests and goals as the contexts for reading instruction in the adult education component of the program. A consistent goal for all parents in FACE programs is to support their children's literacy development. The purposes described here focus on bringing reading activities and strategies into other components of their family literacy programs as well.

FACE Program	Purpose for Reading	Learning Activities	Selected Text	Instruction in RWU
Blackwater Community School *Gila River Reservation Coolidge, Arizona*	• To access information about the history of Gila River Indian Reservation • To understand loss of the O'Otham Language as a result of river diversion and relocation of tribes • To discover ways to reclaim the language and culture and share these with children	• Accessed internet articles describing desert life and history of Gila River • Listened to elders tell stories • Read recipes and created Rebus Charts for children in English and O'Otham • Created Desert Scrapbooks and translated into O'Otham • Created books for children	• *A Pima Remembers* by George Webb • *Pima Indian Legends* by Anna Moore Shaw • Variety of internet articles • Variety of children's literature	• Practiced note taking and highlighting main ideas • Rewrote passages in their own words • Summarized passages to build comprehension • Created vocabulary charts of O'Otham and English terms • Engaged in repeated readings of text to children
Chi Chi'l Tah/Jones Community School *Navajo Nation Vanderwagon, New Mexico*	• To access information about topics of interest related to television programming • To make decisions related to children and adult television viewing	• Generated questions about the cartoon, *Sponge Bob* • Read articles to find answers about origination and opinions of program • Developed methods to guide children's viewing of TV programs	• Internet articles • *TV Guide*	• Analyzed story structure evident in cartoons and children's books • Identified character traits and motivations • Compared and contrasted different points of view • Created "Word Banks" to study vocabulary and created a "Word Wall" • Learned to write definitions, using the dictionary as guide • Made "Flash Cards" to use in dyads.
Crownpoint Community School *Navajo Nation Crownpoint, New Mexico*	• To identify developmentally appropriate social/emotional growth in children • To develop vocabulary for labeling and discussing feelings • To become more understanding of self, of other adults, and of children • To support young children in their literacy development	• Discovered and named different feelings experienced by characters in short stories and short biographies • Identified and named their own feelings • Developed communication strategies to discuss positive and negative feelings • Discussed how to help children to name their own feelings	• Variety of children's literature • Short stories • Short biographies • Community resources	• Teacher read aloud daily to model fluency • Participated in dialogic reading with children to monitor comprehension • Developed concept maps to categorize types of feelings and associated terms • Created a "Word Wall" of relevant vocabulary

FACE Program	Purpose for Reading	Learning Activities	Selected Text	Instruction in RWU
Little Singer Community School *Navajo Nation Winslow, Arizona*	• To access information about Navajo history • To learn about Navajo rights • To discover how to take action related to rights	• Participated in small and large reading groups • Wrote daily reflection and response pages related to history • Created art works based on responses to the readings	• *Dinetah: An Early History of the Navaho People* by Lawrence Sundeberg • Chapters and articles about Manueliot, Navajo leader • Treaties • Biographies	• Practiced using text features common to history texts: timelines, photo captions, bold print • Explored underlining as a strategy for locating important information • Participated in daily discussion related to the reading and its connection to their reading purposes.
Rough Rock Community School *Navajo Nation Chinle, Arizona*	• To access information about health issues prevalent among these and other families in the community: diabetes, depression, and alcoholism • To learn how to take action in order to Walk in Beauty	• Listed and graphed major diseases that affect the families in the program • Selected focus (diabetes) and made a KWRL chart to guide their reading • Small groups read and reported to large group • Developed Power Point presentations to share • Developed Four Directions Wheel with information on disease and diet	• *A Journey to Wellness* • Navajo Curriculum: *Walking Across the Navajo Nation*	• Read to find answers to self-posed questions on KWRL chart • Used charts and graphic organizers to summarize information gained from reading in order to share with others • Adapted a commercial phonics program to correspond with the Navajo alphabet • Developed a culturally appropriate alphabetics system

Using Purposeful Instruction to Build Key Knowledge, Skills, and Strategies: Examples From Other Programs

Adult students in Wyndham, Maine, decided to give a gift to a district superintendent who was leaving the school system. Knowing that she liked to listen to books-on-tape in the car, the class created an audiotape of each class member reading a special text. Each student selected a favorite poem, short narrative, or children's book and developed fluency through Read-Aloud practice sessions. When they were satisfied with their oral reading, they made a tape recording and presented it to the superintendent.

These students also participated in weekly book discussion clubs. Each student assumed a role—selector, questioner, summarizer, life connector, or vocabulary enricher—and came to the group prepared to participate in a rich discussion of the selected text.

Parents in the Southwest Corner Even Start Program in Pennsylvania used graphic organizers to analyze book chapters. The herringbone organizer was a favorite for separating main ideas from detail.

The Pennsylvania group adapted the RWU Diary by rewriting the Standard in simple language. Each component was posted on a separate sheet of chart paper. As students learned new strategies, they were noted on the appropriate charts. After each in-class reading experience, students wrote in their diaries and recorded use of newly learned strategies.

Parents in the Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center in Missouri read to their children during Parents and Children Together Time. They developed fluency by reading children's books aloud in practice sessions with other adult students, who provided feedback. Then, they shared the books with their children.

Parents in the Manchester Literacy Center in Delaware engaged in "concept sorts," dividing words related to their career study into categories. Students then shared with each other the reasons for their decision-making, making clear the connections they saw between the various terms.

A student in Easton, Pennsylvania, developed a pamphlet about safety in the home by summarizing material she had been reading. She worked with her teacher to plan the "safety" book because of an incident in which her son pulled a tablecloth off a table on which was a lighted candle. She started thinking about the need for safety, talked with her teacher about it, and then went to the library to research the topic. Her pamphlet was added to the rich collection of texts available for student use in the classroom. ●

EFF Hot Topics (Highlights on Teaching Topics) is a publication of the EFF Center for Training and Technical Assistance. Each issue concentrates on a specific topic, highlighting examples of actual practice and offering strategies and tools for using EFF in the classroom.

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■ **The Partnership for Reading website** is another rich resource for information on reading instruction. *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction* cited in Amy Trawick's article can be downloaded at:
http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/html/adult_ed/adult_ed_1.html

The web version, *Adult Education Reading Instruction Principles and Practices* has additional information on instructional practices and is found at:
http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/adult_reading/adult_reading.html

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Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy

Snow, C.E. & Strucker, J. (2000). Lessons from preventing reading difficulties in young children for adult learning and literacy. In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith (Eds.), *The annual review of adult learning and literacy, volume 1* (pp. 25–73). Copyright © 2000 by Jossey-Bass, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

In the spring of 1998 the National Research Council released a report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy (PRD). This report, produced by a committee that included members identified with quite diverse perspectives on reading instruction, was widely heralded as having the potential to "end the reading wars." PRD was written with the goal of contributing to the prevention of reading difficulties by documenting the contributions of research to an understanding of reading development and the conditions under which reading develops with the greatest ease. The report started by presenting the best current, research-based model of skilled reading as a basis for reviewing the literature to determine which groups and individuals are at greatest risk of failure and what factors are associated with the reduction of risk. The perhaps somewhat utopian vision offered by PRD was that if the long list of recommendations within the report were implemented, the incidence of reading difficulties among American school children would be reduced from 15 percent to 40 percent down to 3 percent to 5 percent—eventually.

The most frequent question encountered by members of the PRD committee as they talk about the report to groups of educators is, "But what do we do about the middle and secondary school students who haven't learned to read? Will the recommendations in the report help them?" A similar question could be formulated about the many adults in the United States with poor literacy skills. This chapter discusses the implications of the report for adult literacy and family literacy programs, including programs teaching English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The questions we address include the following: What is the relevance of the research base reviewed in the report to understanding adult literacy performance and instructional practice for adults? Are the risk factors identified in the report as justifying secondary prevention efforts equally applicable to adult learners? What is the future of adult basic education (ABE) in a world where reading difficulties have truly been well prevented?

We begin with a brief summary of the findings of PRD that we consider most relevant to ABE and ESOL. We then present six case studies of adult literacy learners to illustrate how the issues brought up in PRD are and are not directly relevant to adult literacy difficulties. We conclude by suggesting areas of adult literacy in need of further research and ways that teacher preparation for adult literacy practitioners might be improved.

PRD limited its purview to research relevant to early reading, through third grade. The report identifies six opportunities that, if accessible to every child, would greatly decrease the risk of reading difficulties:

1. Support for the acquisition of language and of sufficient metalinguistic awareness to approach the segmentation of speech into smaller units that could be related to alphabetic writing

2. Exposure to print and to literacy uses and functions

3. Development of enthusiasm for reading

4. Opportunities to grasp and master the alphabetic principle[1]

5. Access to preventive services if needed

6. Access to intervention as soon as reading difficulties emerge

With reference to the early years of school, the six opportunities define domains to which excellent reading instruction must attend; in other words, early adequate reading instruction provides children with the opportunity to acquire knowledge of and facility with the alphabetic principle and with sufficient practice to achieve fluency in the application of the alphabetic principle so that the construction of meaning is not disrupted.

The issues that emerge in higher stages of reading development (reading to learn, acquisition of literate vocabulary, education in content areas, and reading for critical purposes) are not covered by the report (although the report's discussion of the importance of decontextualized language skills even in the preschool years prefigures the important topic of the obstacles that at-risk learners face in some of these areas). A large proportion of ABE students—both those who are reading disabled and those who are not but still have all of the other risk factors—are stuck precisely at these later stages of literacy development.

RISK FACTORS

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy devotes considerable attention to the task of defining risk factors and using the research literature as a basis for deciding which children are at an elevated risk of reading difficulties. We use this section of the report as a basis for comparison with factors associated with the risk of low literacy in the adult population.

Which Children Are at Risk for Literacy Problems?

The report distinguishes group and individual risk factors—not because the difference has any theoretical significance but because the strategies for identifying and providing secondary prevention efforts differ for the two types of risk. The most important group risk factors are listed here, but it is important to note that these factors are likely to be correlated with one another and, thus, that it has been impossible to determine the contribution of each individually:

- Attending a chronically low-achieving school. If a school consistently scores well below average on norm-referenced reading tests, any child attending that school (even children who do not bring other risk factors with them) is at elevated risk of reading difficulty. It has been widely documented that even middle-class children attending generally low-ranked schools do poorly. The consistently poor performance of such schools suggests the absence of a coherent strategy for teaching reading, a paucity of attentive teachers with high expectations for student success, and/or the adoption of unsuccessful approaches to teaching reading.

- Having low proficiency in English. Latino children are about twice as likely as Anglo children to read below average for their age. Although it is difficult to sort out precisely what percentage of the elevated risk of Latino children can be attributed to low proficiency in English (since many Latinos are native English speakers), clearly poor English skills at the time that reading instruction commences constitutes one source of risk. This risk cannot be attributed primarily to the child; it represents a failure of the educational system to develop adequate methods for introducing such children to literacy and ambivalence about the role of Spanish in their literacy instruction.

- Speaking a nonstandard dialect of English. Children who speak dialects of English identified with poverty, ethnic minorities, or

immigrant groups (such as Caribbean or Indian English) are at elevated risk of literacy difficulties. It is not entirely clear whether these difficulties can be attributed directly to the children's unfamiliarity with standard English, the poverty and limited education of the families from which they come, the reactions school personnel have to nonstandard speakers, or problems of mapping their own phonological system onto the phoneme-grapheme correspondences being taught. Thus, although we know that nonstandard speakers, like non-English speakers, need special attention and better-than-average instruction, we cannot use the fact of elevated risk as a basis for deciding the cause of the difficulties.

- Living in a community of poverty. Coming from a home with limited financial and educational resources is, in and of itself, not a major risk factor. However, living in such a home when it is located in a community composed of similarly situated families, and with the high likelihood that the neighborhood school will show generally poor achievement levels, does constitute a major risk.

Individual risk factors, which may and often do coincide with the group risks, include the following:

- Delayed or disordered language development. Children with a history of language problems are very likely to encounter difficulties in learning to read. Reading builds on the child's analysis of his or her own phonological, lexical, and grammatical knowledge. Children for whom such knowledge is shaky, still developing, and poorly consolidated are on much shakier ground when asked to engage in metalinguistic tasks such as performing phoneme segmentation, learning sound-symbol correspondences, or writing.

- Hearing impairments. The deaf population in general shows poor reading achievement. In fact, deaf children must learn English as a second language, just as native speakers of Spanish or Chinese do, and they are additionally challenged by the difference in mode between their native language (a gesture-based system) and the aural-oral mode of English. Although deaf children can learn enough about the alphabetic system to read at a third- or fourth-grade level, evidently the inaccessibility of a phonological representation of English makes further progress extremely difficult for many.

- Developmental delays or disorders. Children with any of a wide variety of developmental challenges—mental retardation, emotional problems, attention deficits—will find learning to read more difficult than children without such risks. It is worthy of note that there is very high comorbidity for emotional problems and communication disorders and that approximately 50 percent of children with attention deficit disorder also have diagnosed language problems. The documented comorbidity rates may reflect a deeper reality that early in childhood, any developmental problem is likely to be reflected in a variety of domains. Reading, as a challenging problem area, is likely to be one of the affected domains.

Who Is at Risk in the Adult Population?

To discuss those parts of PRD that might relate to practice and research in the fields of adult basic education and adult education in English for speakers of other languages, we first need to summarize what is known about the demographic characteristics of adult literacy students and then what is known about the reading accomplishments of this population.

Not surprisingly, many adult literacy students embody some of the demographic risk factors associated with early reading difficulties in PRD and in previous national reports on reading (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1995; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985)—factors such as poverty and membership in ethnic or linguistic minority groups. As noted in PRD, poverty is not by itself necessarily a risk factor for reading, but economic disadvantages are strongly associated with other risk factors, such as having fewer literacy-building experiences in early childhood and receiving poor-quality schooling.

Since the mid-1970s researchers have consistently described the U.S. adult literacy population in similar socioeconomic terms: most students are poor or low income, minority groups are disproportionately represented, and increasing numbers are not native speakers of English (Cook, 1977; Hunter & Harman, 1985; Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993; Sticht, 1988, 1998). Despite occasional reports of financially successful people who have reading difficulties (Johnston, 1985), adult literacy classes are overwhelmingly composed of the poor, the underemployed, and the unemployed.

Why are we bothering to restate the obvious: that adult literacy students come from poor, educationally disadvantaged backgrounds? As we turn to describing the kinds of reading difficulties ABE/ESOL students face, we want to keep in mind the interaction of their academic difficulties

with their life histories and current socioeconomic circumstances. Like other human activities, reading ability develops in various social contexts over time. So, for example, when we discuss the vocabulary knowledge of adult students, we will also discuss how their childhood and adult exposure to words may have influenced its development.

SKILLED READING

PRD is focused on the period from birth through third grade, a crucial time in language and literacy acquisition. Through school-based instruction and independent reading, children learn to decode words independently, become automatic and fluent at word recognition, and begin to develop the skills in reading to learn that will allow them to use reading as a lifelong tool for education and enjoyment.

How Does Literacy Develop Through Grade 3?

PRD identifies several domains of development that are crucial to the emergence of solid literacy skills during the early school years.

Cognitive, Emotional, and Social Development. It should be clear that reading, a complex achievement, is more likely to develop in a risk-free way in children who are healthy and physiologically intact and show normal developments in the domains of cognition (in particular, understanding symbolization), emotionality and attention, and sociability.

Language Development. Children start to produce language sometime around their first birthday, but if they have been exposed to sufficient spoken language, they have already organized their speech discrimination systems to match the language they will learn. Children also typically understand several words or phrases before they start to speak. Children's language development is a prerequisite to reading in some indirect and direct ways.

First, the texts children use when they first learn to read are composed of words and grammatical structures. Children who know those words and structures orally will have easier access to meaning through reading. Second, as children acquire more vocabulary words, they become increasingly sensitive to the internal differences in the sounds and sequences of sounds of those words—awareness that is crucial to mastering the alphabetic principle. Third, children who have the opportunity to use language in a wide variety of communicative tasks learn about the different forms of communication appropriate to different situations—that talking on the telephone requires giving more explicit

information than chatting face to face, that telling stories requires sequencing events, that talking about fantasy worlds and hypotheses requires forms like pretend, suppose, and if. In every respect, the progress of language development during the preschool and early school years must be seen as one aspect of literacy development.

Phonological Awareness. For children learning to read an alphabetic language such as English, phonological awareness constitutes a precursor to reading in its own right. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to focus on the sounds of language rather than the meaning. Early evidence of children's phonological awareness often comes from their language play (willy, wally, wooly), their enjoyment or production of rhymes (cat, sat, fat, pat), or their ability to question language forms (Is his name Rory because he makes so much noise?).

Language segmentation abilities also reveal phonological awareness; typically young children can segment a sentence into meaningful units (The little girl/ate/lots of ice cream.), but only at about age four will children reliably isolate meaningless, grammatical words such as the and of as separate units. Four-year-olds can typically be shown how to separate syllables as well; syllables are relatively accessible, pronounceable units. Much more challenging is the ability to segment a word or syllable into its component sounds (phonemes): recognizing, for example, that cat has three parts, /c/, /a/, and /t/. Children who understand this are said to have achieved phonemic awareness, important because it is crucial in learning to read English to understand that letters stand for phonemes, not syllables or words.

Phonemic awareness develops gradually. A relatively easy phonemic awareness task involves removing the first "little bit" from a word (say the name Fred without the fff) or thinking of words that start with the same sound. Segmenting or matching on final sounds is more difficult. Removing medial sounds (say Fred without the rrrr) is extremely hard. While research makes clear that phonemic awareness continues to develop during the early stages of conventional reading, it is clear that children with no capacity to recognize, segment, or attend to individual phonemes will have a very hard time understanding phonics-based instruction, which presupposes such understanding.

Literacy Development. By literacy development, we mean development of understandings about the functions and uses of print, an understanding that language used in books may differ in certain ways from that used orally, an appreciation for literacy activities, as well as the development of the skills of reading and writing in conventional ways.

Children arrive at school with vastly different amounts and kinds of experience in using literacy or seeing literacy used in their homes. Those who have had lots of chances to be read to, practice writing or scribbling, use magnetic letters (of the sort that attach to the refrigerator door), recognize letters and words in print they see in their daily environments, and so on will be much better prepared for reading instruction.

Is There Development in Reading After Grade 3?

Of course, considerable development in language and literacy occurs beyond third grade, even for learners who are progressing as expected in literacy. A comparison of the books read by children at the end of third grade and those read by children even just a few years older makes clear how much is left to learn after the basic reading skills are established. Older readers can handle a wider variety of text types, a much higher incidence of rare or unknown vocabulary items, and more complex sentences and rhetorical structures; they can understand literary devices signaling irony, sarcasm, humor, multiple perspectives, violations of the time line, hypothetical and counterfactual reasoning, and much more.

Advanced Language Skills. These developments in literacy skills parallel enormous developments after grade 3 in children's oral language skills. The new language skills typical of this developmental period have been variously referred to as decontextualized (Snow, 1983) or focused (Scollon & Scollon, 1982), as oral literacy (Tannen, 1982), and as extended discourse skills (Ninio & Snow, 1996). All of these terms refer to the characteristic that language can be used in a more autonomous way—to create realities rather than just referring to reality and to represent relatively complex states of affairs. Often these uses of language are also reflexive and analytic. Giving definitions, for example, requires that children analyze their own knowledge of word meanings and figure out which aspects of what they know about a word are likely to be shared. This decontextualized, or extended, use of language is relevant to literacy precisely because the texts that older children come to read use this sort of language. They are likely to be introducing novel, often complex information in ways that presuppose little shared background information and with the pragmatic features typical of distanced communication. Such texts create demands that are quite different from those of primary grade readings; early texts are mostly narratives, using only the few thousand most common words of English, telling about relatively familiar sorts of individuals and events, appearing together with contextualizing pictures, and benefiting from support for comprehension through instructional activities.

The presentation of more decontextualized texts to slightly older children may indeed generate new cases of reading difficulties even among children who have developed as expected through grade 3. More likely, though, the children who found the texts of the later elementary grades impossible to comprehend were showing some difficulties at earlier stages of reading as well, but perhaps slight enough that they were masked by strengths in some components of the reading process.

Matthew Effects. The organizing metaphor of "Matthew effects" was introduced to the field of reading by Keith Stanovich (1986) to explain the development of individual differences in both reading and more general cognitive functioning in verbal areas. It takes its name from the "rich get richer and the poor get poorer" discussion in the Gospel according to Matthew. Interweaving inherited and environmental factors, Stanovich argued that relatively small cognitive differences (especially in phonological processing) among young children can lead to wide and socially significant differences in adult outcomes, not just in reading but in verbal intelligence.

Here is a schematic version of how Matthew effects might play out. If a child has a phonological processing difficulty at the outset of reading instruction, then the acquisition of word analysis skills in kindergarten and first grade may be imperiled. If word analysis skills are not developed, then the child's decoding (the ability to figure out the pronunciations of unknown words independently) is compromised. In addition, her ability to progress from analyzing letter sounds to orthographic processing (recognizing letter and syllable patterns as units) may not develop adequately. If the child cannot decode independently, then it is more difficult and frustrating for her to practice reading independently. If the child cannot practice reading independently, then fluent reading may fail to develop by the end of third grade. If fluent reading is not in place by the end of third grade, there are at least two results.

First, reading is less enjoyable, leading the child to read less (thus adversely affecting fluency itself). Second, if fluent reading fails to develop, then reading to learn in the later grades is imperiled for two related reasons: first, because the child must devote too much effort to word recognition, leaving insufficient resources to devote to comprehension (Perfetti, 1985), and, second, because when reading is disfluent and slow, the longer clauses and sentences that increasingly occur in content passages in the middle grades cannot be processed as effectively. If the ability to read to learn does not develop sufficiently, the child's ability to use reading to acquire vocabulary and concepts is

affected, and schoolwork becomes increasingly difficult. Since knowledge in school subjects is cumulative, incomplete acquisition of basic vocabulary and background concepts in middle school can imperil high school learning.

Notice that even in this brief schematic representation of what Stanovich called a "cascade" of reading difficulties, cognitive-neurological factors are reciprocally related to behavioral-environmental factors. For example, the early phonological difficulty (of presumed neurological-cognitive origin) ultimately leads to the behavioral consequence of reading less, which impedes the acquisition of the cognitive skills in automatic word recognition. Stanovich also raised the issue that reading ability and verbal IQ are reciprocally related, especially as readers move into adulthood. (See also Stanovich, 1991, and Siegel, 1989.) In practice this means that a forty-five-year-old adult who has been a lifelong nonreader is likely to score lower on verbal IQ tests than a forty-five-year-old who has been a lifelong reader; this is because the nonreader could not use reading to acquire some of the skills and knowledge needed for such tests.

With respect to the ABE/ESOL population, Stanovich's (1986) discussion of social environmental factors is especially relevant. The development of phonological awareness seems to have a strong inherited component, but it is probably also strongly influenced by the child's exposure to oral language in infancy and early childhood. If a child's exposure to oral language is substantially limited, comprising substantially fewer words and phoneme distinctions, then he may have fewer sounds on which to practice and develop his phonological awareness.

In a study of preschool children's vocabulary learning, Hart and Risley (1995) found that children of welfare families had far fewer language interactions with adults and were exposed to far fewer different words than were children from working-class and middle-class families. As a consequence, the children from welfare families not only knew the meanings of fewer words than the other children, but they were acquiring new vocabulary at a much slower rate, falling increasingly behind the other children in vocabulary knowledge with the passage of time. Thus, it is possible that the vocabulary difficulties of some ABE students began long before school, in early childhood, with the establishment of slower rates of vocabulary learning and less developed schema for learning new words.

Where Are Adult Literacy Students on This Developmental Continuum? ABE and some ESOL students can be found at every point along this schematic representation of reading difficulties. Some students appear stalled at early stages of reading by severe unremediated phonological difficulties. However, it is much more common for ABE/ESOL students to enroll with partial or incomplete development of the various reading skills: partial acquisition of phonological awareness (reflected in decoding problems and poor spelling), fluency lagging the equivalent of several grade levels (often called grade equivalents, or GEs)[2] behind untimed silent comprehension, vocabulary levels lagging behind their years of school completion, and background knowledge in the content areas stalled below 5 GE.

Until recently, many ABE programs were unaware of difficulties in decoding and fluency, particularly among students reading above 5 GE in silent reading (Strucker, 1997). Indeed, in programs where teachers were advised not to ask adults to do oral reading because it was not an "authentic" literacy act, decoding and fluency problems could go undetected for months or years. But if current models of the reading process are accurate (Chall, 1983; Perfetti, 1985; Stanovich, 1986; Adams, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), poor decoding and lack of fluency will greatly impede the acquisition of levels of vocabulary and content knowledge that students need to pass the General Educational Development (GED) tests. Even modest gains in those processing areas can lead to substantial gains in comprehension for ABE learners.

What Does It Take to Be a Skilled Reader?

Although there has been considerable controversy about the nature of skilled reading and the degree to which all skilled readers are similar to one another, in recent years a consensus has developed among researchers, who agree that skilled readers can do the following:

- Read all or most of the words on the page

- Notice most of the letters in each word and use the letters to access a phonological representation of the word

- Read words quickly because they have automatized the processes of letter recognition and phonological access through practice

- Rely heavily on context cues for comprehension

- Use context cues only minimally for word recognition, which is primarily driven by using letters to access sounds

- Almost always read with a purpose, focus on meaning, and self-monitor their comprehension

Research comparing skilled and less skilled readers at any age or grade level typically finds differences in a wide variety of dimensions. Skilled readers are better than age-matched poorer readers in vocabulary, world knowledge, literal as well as inferential comprehension, and comprehension monitoring and repair strategies. Skilled readers are also typically better than poorer readers in various skills relevant to word identification (getting to the right pronunciation) and lexical access (getting to the right word), knowledge of how spelling patterns relate to pronunciation, sensitivity to relative frequency of letter strings, speed of word reading, and use of context to select the right meaning for homographs (different words spelled the same way).

The development of these reading skills rests on an appreciation of the alphabetic principle—knowledge that letters represent phonemes—and mastery of that principle through large amounts of practice reading. Practice in reading produces fluency, or the ability to read relatively quickly and without conscious attention to the process of word identification. Without some level of fluency, comprehension of longer texts is very difficult, because the construction of meaning is disrupted by the difficulty and slowness of word recognition.

Among the six opportunities to learn, three relate specifically to this model of skilled reading: children need opportunities to learn and master the alphabetic principle, focus on reading for meaning at every stage of instruction, and have enough opportunities to practice reading to achieve fluency. The fourth opportunity—to develop enthusiasm about literacy—is crucial. Most children encounter obstacles somewhere along the road to literacy, and without a clear understanding of how important and potentially pleasurable literacy achievement is, they are unlikely to persist.

Conclusions Concerning Skilled Reading

It should be clear that in discussing either children or adults, we start from three assumptions about reading.

First, skilled reading is the product of a developmental process that starts early in life and changes both qualitatively and quantitatively as readers grow older and experience literacy more widely.

Second, although advanced readers experience reading as a seamless process, it is helpful to view reading as the product of several

different lines of development and to view skilled reading as the integration of several components (visual word identification, phonological access, lexical access, monitoring for comprehension, and so on).

Third, the relationships between the components change as the reader develops (Stanovich, 1986; Chall, 1983; Curtis, 1980). For example, when beginning readers are learning letter-sound correspondences (word analysis or phonics), they usually perfect that skill on text that contains highly familiar words. This allows them to map the letter combinations onto words whose phonological representations are well known and easily accessible. They are not expected to learn new words at the same time they are learning the alphabetic principle. However, within a few years after learning to read, successful readers are reading to learn and using reading itself to expand and deepen their vocabulary knowledge. At this stage of reading development, it is crucial that they read text with new and sufficiently challenging vocabulary and concepts. The word analysis skills that were an important focus of instruction for the beginning reader have become automatized, making fluent word recognition possible. At this stage word analysis skills are consciously employed only when decoding and spelling unfamiliar words.

THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION POPULATION

In reviewing PRD, some adult educators may argue that not many of their students currently fall within this 0 to 3 GE beginning level of reading achievement. But as the estimates that follow suggest, a surprisingly large percentage of adults attending literacy programs fall directly within this category in reading. Of course, it is rare to find adults (except for ESOL beginners in English) who have not developed sufficient oral language skills to support initial reading instruction.

To What Members of the ABE Population Is PRD Relevant?

It is impossible to say with precision what percentage of the students in the ABE/ESOL system read at 3 GE or below. Not all ABE students (especially those below 4 GE) are given norm-referenced tests in reading, and when they are tested, they are usually not assessed with the same instruments nationwide or even from one center to another within most states. To complicate matters further, in some areas of the United States many beginning adult readers are served by volunteer tutoring programs that may not use norm-referenced tests or keep centralized records. A preliminary analysis of data from the forthcoming Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) by Strucker and Davidson indicates that

about 9 percent of the students enrolled in ABE classes scored below 4 GE on a silent reading comprehension test.[3]

Reder (1997) analyzed four databases, including the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993),[4] to define the characteristics and participation of "first-level learners," the target population for basic literacy services. Of the 15 million adult, native speakers of English, ages sixteen and above, estimated to function at NALS Level 1, approximately 6 million function at the lowest levels of Level 1 (Reder, 1997). Although the NALS was not designed to map directly onto grade-equivalent scores, it seems likely that many of these 6 million adults read approximately at 3 GE or below.

ESOL enrollments of students below 3 GE present a different picture. By definition, nearly all adults enrolling in beginning ESOL classes would be likely to have limited English reading skills until they have learned how to decode English and have learned enough English vocabulary to read at above 3 GE in English. How many of these students are there? In 1996, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) reported that about 40 percent of all U.S. adult basic education students were enrolled in ESOL classes. Estimating that one-third of these 40 percent were enrolled in beginning ESOL classes (a conservative estimate because in many areas beginning ESOL is more heavily enrolled than intermediate or advanced), this means that at least 13 percent of the total U.S. enrollment in ESOL classes is made up of students reading English at 3 GE or below.

Taken together with Strucker and Davidson's preliminary estimate of 9 percent of native speakers reading at 3 GE or below, this means that more than 20 percent of the ABE/ESOL population may actually be reading at or below the level directly addressed by the PRD.

The relevance of the report is not restricted to adult students who are currently reading at 3 GE or below. In addition to those adults reading at 3 GE or below, many more ABE students and some ESOL students may have experienced significant difficulties in language and reading at these early stages of development when they were children. Some of these students may have completely overcome the early reading problems, but for others their early difficulties continue to affect their subsequent progress. Thus, we will be discussing not only what is known from the research about adult readers at 3 GE and below but also what is known about the range of adult readers—from beginners all the way through GED candidates.

What Is Known About ABE and ESOL Students as Readers?

At the outset we must admit that we have to restrict much of our discussion to ABE readers because little research has been done on adult ESOL reading in populations other than students at universities. The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993) provided a rich and rigorously developed picture of the functional literacy skills of U.S. residents aged sixteen to sixty-five by showing what proportion of adults were able to perform simulated real-world literacy tasks at various levels. However, its assessments were not designed to shed light on why a given reader or groups of readers might have had difficulty with various NALS literacy tasks. Although it is likely that most adults enrolled in ABE/ESOL programs would end up in the two lowest levels of the NALS, the precise reading difficulties that led to these results cannot be inferred from the NALS data.

Our best sources of information on the reading difficulties of adults come from reading clinics (Johnson & Blalock, 1987; Chall, 1994). Based on adult readers' profiles from the Harvard Adult Literacy Initiative, Chall (1994) made the following observations:

> When we had assessed and taught about 100 adults, we began to be aware of two patterns of scores—one that was common among adults for whom English was a second language; the other resembled the patterns of strengths and weaknesses found among children and adults who tend to be diagnosed as having learning disabilities.

> We found the ESL group ... to be relatively stronger in the ... word recognition or print aspects of reading, as distinguished from the meaning or comprehension aspects. The "learning disability" pattern ...[includes] ... adults ... who are relatively stronger in word meaning and relatively weaker in the print aspects of reading—word recognition and analysis, spelling, and oral reading.

Other researchers have documented the presence of learning disabilities and reading disabilities in the adult literacy population. Read and Ruyter (1985) and Read (1988a, 1988b), in studies of prison inmates, found that a majority of those who were reading below high school levels showed signs of moderate to severe decoding and word recognition problems, which the researchers believed were rooted in phonological processing deficits. In a reading/age-matched study, Pratt and Brady (1988) found that the low-literacy adults they tested resembled reading-disabled children rather than normally progressing elementary school readers, based on decoding and phonological processing difficulties among those adults.

A number of investigators have documented the persistence of childhood reading disabilities into adulthood (Bruck, 1990, 1992; Johnson & Blalock, 1987; Fink, 1998; Strucker, 1995, 1997; Spreen & Haaf, 1986). Bruck's research focused on people who had been reading disabled as children but had managed to become relatively successful adult readers. She found that even those successful adult readers still had difficulty with phoneme deletion tasks that most children have mastered by the end of third grade. Fink's research (1998) with highly successful adult dyslexics indicated that despite attaining high levels of silent reading comprehension, many of her subjects continued to exhibit spelling difficulties and slow rates of reading.

In a cluster analysis study of 120 adult literacy students in Massachusetts, Strucker (1995, 1997) found strong evidence to confirm Chall's observation that adult literacy students tend to fall into either the reading-disabled or ESOL categories. Of a total of nine clusters of adult learners, from beginners through GED levels, five clusters strongly conformed to Chall's twofold characterization (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Two apparently "learning-disabled" clusters emerged in which the learners were much stronger in the meaning-based aspects of reading (vocabulary and comprehension) than in the print aspects (phonological awareness, word analysis, word recognition, spelling, and oral reading). These two clusters were made up exclusively of native speakers of English, with more than 95 percent of the cluster members reporting that they had received "extra help" in reading when they were children, ranging from one-on-one tutoring and Chapter 1 or Title 1 placement (66 percent) to formal classification as learning disabled by school authorities (29 percent). Three other clusters were made up of 75 percent ESOL learners who were much stronger in the print aspects (phonological awareness,[5] word analysis, word recognition, spelling, and oral reading) and much weaker in the meaning-based aspects of reading (vocabulary and comprehension).

Interestingly, the remaining 25 percent of the learners in those three "ESOL" clusters were actually native speakers of English; they were young adults of various ethnic backgrounds who had dropped out of inner-city schools. These young adults resembled the inner-city children described by Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) in that they had no significant phonological or word recognition difficulties but had apparently not developed the literate vocabularies in middle school and high school reading that would support comprehension at levels beyond 4–5 GE.

Strucker also found strong evidence of childhood reading difficulties in the remaining four clusters. In both beginners' clusters and both GED-level clusters, an average of 58 percent of the learners reported receiving some form of "extra help" as defined above. (Not every learner in this study who may have been reading disabled was diagnosed in childhood. Generally people who are more than fifty years old attended school before such determinations were formalized.)

The NALS touched briefly on the incidence of learning disabilities in the population as a whole by asking a single yes/no question: "Do you currently have a learning disability?" Reder (1995) analyzed responses to that question with respect to years of school completion, economic attainment, and NALS level attainment. Among native speakers of English in the sample as a whole, 2.8 percent answered this question in the affirmative, but among the Level 1 participants, this figure was 9.5 percent, dropping to 0.24 percent among Level 5 participants. Reder concluded, "Learning disabilities are concentrated primarily among adults at the lowest literacy level."

CASE HISTORIES OF SIX ADULT LEARNERS

To make our discussion of adult learners more concrete, we present six brief case histories of typical adult learners from Boston-area adult literacy centers and the Harvard Adult Reading Laboratory (Strucker, 1995, 1997). Strucker (1995) tested 120 adults using six components of reading (word analysis or phonics, word recognition, spelling, oral reading, silent reading comprehension, and oral vocabulary) and also conducted a brief test of phonemic awareness. (See the chapter appendix for an explanation of the assessments used.) Each student's score on these measures made up his or her reading profile. The 120 individual profiles were then subjected to cluster analysis, with the result that nine clusters of adult readers emerged, ranging from beginning levels of reading all the way up through GED. The individuals whose stories are presented here had reading test scores and educational backgrounds typical of students in their respective clusters. Their real names are not used here.

Joseph, a Beginning Reader

At the time of testing in 1994, Joseph, an African American living in Boston, was fifty-nine years old. He had grown up on the outskirts of a small town in South Carolina, where his family were sharecroppers raising cotton and tobacco. He reported that his father could read "a little" but that his mother was completely illiterate. His test scores as an adult indicated that he could recognize words at an early first-grade level

and had not mastered the most basic levels of word analysis skills. Joseph was unable to read the 3 GE reading comprehension passage, the lowest GE available in the battery used. His oral vocabulary at 5 GE was actually slightly higher than that of many adult nonreaders from working-class backgrounds. Following is his reading profile:

> Rosner 1 GE[6]
>
> Word analysis 1 GE
>
> Word recognition 1 GE
>
> Spelling 1.5 GE
>
> Oral reading 1 GE
>
> Comprehension Not attempted
>
> Oral vocabulary 5 GE

Joseph is a living compendium of the risk factors, both social and personal, identified in PRD. He attended a segregated, rural school that was a two-mile walk from his home and where, based on his reports, he received poor-quality reading instruction. Classes were large, and what few books there were could not be taken home. His only memories of reading instruction were of the teacher's writing words on the blackboard and the children being asked to spell them letter by letter, and then being asked to read them.[7] After his father died, when Joseph was eight years old, he had to work in the fields for most of the year to contribute to the family income, and he attended school only sporadically from that point on, eventually dropping out permanently at age sixteen. Poor-quality schools coupled with poor attendance was a common experience among low-literacy adults of Joseph's generation, especially if they grew up in rural areas.

Based on current phonemic awareness testing and subsequent attempts to teach the alphabetic principle to Joseph using a variety of methods, we feel it is likely that Joseph has a phonologically based reading disability. A subsequent evaluation at the Massachusetts General Hospital Speech and Communications Disorders Program confirmed these observations. This basic phonological processing difficulty was discussed at length in PRD as the most prevalent personal risk factor for early reading problems.

We cannot tell with certainty how severe Joseph's phonological disability was when he was a child. Results of intervention studies cited in PRD suggest that if children with moderate disabilities in this area receive early instruction in phonological awareness, their rates of reading failure can be greatly reduced. (See summaries of this research by

Blachman, 1994, 1997.) These kinds of early interventions did not exist when Joseph started school in the late 1930s. We can only speculate on what might have been the results if he had been given such help. Phonological development in children not only contributes to reading success; reading and spelling themselves probably contribute reciprocally to phonological development (Blachman, 1997). In Joseph's case, fifty years of not reading or spelling may have caused whatever limited phoneme awareness skills he possessed as a child to deteriorate. As is often the case with ABE students, Joseph's personal risk factors for reading difficulties, such as his inherited phonological difficulties, were undoubtedly exacerbated by social risk factors: his lack of exposure to reading and books as a young child and the particularly inadequate reading instruction he reported receiving in school.

Despite this formidable array of risk factors, Joseph has enjoyed considerable success in life. He worked in a number of factories from the 1950s to 1980s, rising to low-level supervisory positions in some of them through his hard work and excellent interpersonal skills. Joseph married a woman who was a high school graduate, and once their children were grown he worked overtime so that she could attend college and eventually earn a master's degree in business administration. They own a triple-decker home in Boston and have raised three children, and his wife now uses her computer and accounting skills to manage their small trucking company, which also employs their sons. She and the sons draw special maps for Joseph to follow when he has to make a delivery to an unfamiliar location, and she helps him study for truck driving licensing tests. Joseph is the treasurer of his church, but he would like to be able to read from the Bible at services and teach Sunday school.

In many ways Joseph resembles the low-literacy adults described by Fingeret (1983) who are able to rely on family members and networks of friends to help them successfully negotiate the world of print. Still, Joseph's accomplishments are remarkable even in the context of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when workers with minimal reading skills could find steady employment at good wages in factories. In today's job market Joseph's success would be much harder to replicate without basic literacy skills.

Richard, a More Advanced Beginner

Richard was born in a city near Boston; he is the son of West Indian immigrants. He was twenty-four years old and unmarried when he was tested in 1994. He had enrolled in ABE classes because he wanted to earn a high school diploma in order to enlist in the military. Richard's mother

worked as a secretary most of his life, and he and his siblings were read to as children; they were expected to do well in school. His older sister graduated from college. Richard's K–12 schooling, however, featured many interruptions because his mother moved frequently up and down the East Coast during his childhood:

> *I was never in kindergarten at all, and during first, second, and third grade we moved all the time. [Teachers] didn't really deal with my reading problems because by the time they noticed them, we had moved.... I'm still very hurt to this day.... If I'd had an education, I could have done anything.*

Eventually, when he was in fifth grade, Richard's teachers did more than notice his reading problems; he was placed in special education classes from middle school on, and he received remedial reading instruction. In high school he was a popular, outgoing student and earned varsity letters in football and basketball. Because he was bright, well spoken, and a good athlete, his friends assumed he would go on to college with a scholarship. In reality, however, Richard's reading had remained stalled at primary school levels.

In the middle of his junior year in high school, his mother moved the family to Florida. Richard reenrolled in school there but dropped out to take on a full-time job in a fast food restaurant. A year later he returned to Boston, where he has since worked in a number of jobs, including security guard, dishwasher, and clothing salesman.

Here is Richard's reading profile:

Rosner 1.5 GE

Word analysis 1.5 GE[8]

Word recognition 2 GE

Spelling 1.5 GE

Oral reading 4 GE

Comprehension 4 GE

Oral vocabulary 6 GE

Richard's print skills (word analysis, word recognition, and spelling) were much weaker than his meaning-related skills (oral reading, comprehension, and oral vocabulary). His grade-equivalent adult scores should not automatically be interpreted to mean that he is identical to a first grader in word analysis or identical to a sixth grader in oral vocabulary. The miscue patterns of adults and children can be very different. In vocabulary, for example, Richard probably knows many

words he has learned through his work experience and adult life that a sixth grader might not know, while a sixth grader might have learned the meanings of social studies and science words in school that Richard's reading difficulties prevented him from learning when he was that age.

Richard's basic word analysis skills were incomplete, and he seemed to lack confidence in the skills he possessed. His phonemic awareness was comparable with what would be expected at the end of first grade. His word recognition and oral reading miscues involved guesses based on the first few letters of a word and its overall shape, again with much uncertainty about vowels: witch for watch, courage for carriage, and nicest for notice, for example. However, in the oral reading of passages, he was able to use the context to monitor and self-correct some of his decoding mistakes. Although Richard scored at 4 GE in oral reading, his reading was not fluent; it contained several self-corrections, hesitations, and repetitions.

Silent reading comprehension was an area of relative strength for Richard, but he took more than ten minutes to read and answer four questions on the 100-word 4 GE passage, suggesting much rereading and self-correcting as he laboriously constructed the meaning of the passage. At 6 GE, Richard's oral vocabulary was his strongest skill overall. However, some responses reflected his word analysis and phonological difficulties: he described the word console as, "When you put something where you can't see it," confusing it with conceal. Other responses were vague and imprecise: the environment, he said, is "a place you like."

Richard's severe difficulties with decoding and spelling led to his placement in an adult reading class that focused on developing reading fluency and accuracy. Even though silent reading comprehension skills were not explicitly emphasized in this class (although lots of fiction, poetry, and plays were read), after five months Richard began to score at or above 6 GE in silent reading tests, as long as they were administered untimed. It appeared that his modest progress in the print aspects of reading had begun to help him unlock his strengths in the meaning aspects of reading.

Based on his adult testing, it is very clear that he is burdened by the kinds of phonological difficulties identified in PRD, so it is not surprising that Richard was eventually identified by the public schools as in need of extra help in basic reading. Unfortunately he did not get this help until he was in the fifth grade and already several years behind in reading. Moreover, we have no information about the nature of the help he received. If the recommendations in PRD had been followed when

Richard was a young child, his potential reading difficulties would have been identified much earlier.

Moving from one school district to another, as Richard's family did, is bound to constitute a risk factor for any child, and this is especially true for children with reading disabilities. We can hope that PRD will help to make classroom teachers more aware of the need to evaluate a new student's reading immediately, perhaps simply by using an informal reading inventory, so that even children who must change schools frequently can receive extra help in reading as early as possible.

After a year of adult reading classes, Richard had to drop out to work two jobs to help support his mother when she became ill. As in childhood, Richard's education had once again been interrupted.

Comparing Richard with the previous student, Joseph, is instructive, because both appear to have roughly similar risk factors in the area of phonological processing. However, the social and historical milieus in which their reading developed were quite dissimilar. Joseph's parents were not literate, few books were available in his childhood, and he attended poor, rural schools. Richard's mother was highly literate, and Richard attended urban schools some forty years later, when it was routine to diagnose and attempt to treat children with reading disabilities. The practical difference between Richard's word recognition score at 2 GE and Joseph's at 1 GE is much greater than a one-grade difference might mean at higher levels—for example, between 7 GE and 8 GE. As a result of his eleven years of schooling, including some direct help in reading, Richard can recognize enough words to be able to perform somewhat laboriously in oral reading at 4 GE and equally laboriously in silent reading at 4 GE as well, relying heavily in both areas on his context analytical skills. Joseph, on the other hand, recognizes too few words to be able to do any meaningful independent reading at all— too few words to be able to create a context to analyze. Because Richard's sister and many of his high school friends graduated from college, Richard locates himself very much in the literate world. He knows that he would need to read independently to reach his career goal of joining the military. Joseph has organized his life so that he can function with external networks of support in literacy. Joseph views himself as generally successful in life; Richard, as yet, does not.

Rose, a Reading-Disabled Intermediate Reader

Rose is a divorced mother of two who grew up in a white blue-collar family in a series of small towns in eastern Massachusetts. She was age twenty-eight at the time this case history was compiled in 1993 and enrolled in a welfare-to-work program near Boston. Her pattern of reading scores fits that of the reading-disabled adults whom Chall (1994) described. Her print skills (including phoneme awareness) were much weaker than her comprehension and vocabulary skills. Her strong word analysis score suggested that she had, however, mastered basic phonics (consonant sounds and long and short vowels). Reflecting this, her reading of short words was accurate, but she had difficulty on longer, polysyllabic words.

She remembered having a formal evaluation for learning disabilities in kindergarten: "From the beginning I was in special needs [classes]." When asked what extra help she had received in reading, Rose remembered very little attention to her reading. She attributed this to the fact that her schooling occurred during a period of cutbacks in special education and that she and others her age were part of "a lost generation that was just passed on from one year to the next." In fact, she has very few memories of her primary grades at all, except that she got into trouble at school "for always hiding in the closet and refusing to come out." Rose's life outside school was traumatic in the extreme. She was abused sexually during four separate periods in her childhood, from age four through fourteen, by several different male relatives and neighbors. In addition, her mother was an alcoholic who abused her and her siblings verbally and physically.

Rose graduated from high school in a suburb of Boston and went to work as a housekeeper at a hospital. During this time she sometimes experienced cocaine and alcohol problems. She eventually ended up in an abusive marriage to a man with a history of mental illness and violent brushes with the law. Although she tried to leave her husband several times, his threats against her and their children prevented her from doing so. Finally, after he was arrested and imprisoned for the rape of a woman in a shopping center, Rose was able to divorce him. While on welfare, she began to receive counseling and psychotherapy for the first time in her life.

Rose explained that her psychiatrist had not been sure how to characterize her condition. As in some forms of schizophrenia, Rose heard voices, but the voices had names and defined personalities: "Sally," who was passive and accommodating, and "Kevin," who was mean and domineering. Her psychiatrist told Rose that she may have

been on the verge of developing "multiple personality disorder" just when her therapy and antipsychotic medication intervened. Rose reported that her therapy had been unusually successful. After eighteen months of treatment, her medication was reduced and eventually discontinued, and her twice-weekly talk therapy sessions were reduced to monthly telephone check-ins with her therapist. After discontinuing the medication, Rose reported that she still heard the voices occasionally (Sally more than Kevin) but was able to minimize their effects by telling herself "they're both coming from me."

Here is Rose's reading profile:

Rosner 1 GE

Word analysis 3 GE

Word recognition 3 GE

Spelling 3 GE

Oral reading 5 GE

Comprehension 7 GE

Oral vocabulary 6 GE

The profile dates from the period just before her antipsychotic medication was reduced, so it is possible that the medication may have temporarily depressed her functioning in reading. After ten months of twenty-hours-per-week instruction in reading, writing, math, and computer skills, Rose boosted her score on a timed silent reading test to 9.5 GE. She and her teachers felt that this improvement was due partly to the instruction she had received and partly to the fact that she was no longer taking the psychoactive medication. The following fall semester, Rose planned to enroll in a community college woodworking class to develop a portfolio that she could use to apply for a cabinet-making program at a private art school.

Rose's childhood, for all its horror and abuse, did include the presence of books and literacy-related activities in her home. Her teachers seemed to realize that she was in need of special education services, but Rose was unable to remember much about the nature of the help she received in school, so we cannot judge the content or effectiveness of her schooling. Was she placed in special education classes because of poor reading skills or because of troubling behavior stemming from sexual abuse? Was her behavior so troubling that it masked reading problems? In any case, somewhere along the way she acquired basic phonics skills. Building on this firm foundation, her adult education teachers were able to give Rose systematic practice with

polysyllabic words and plenty of oral reading. In a relatively short time, her ability to decode longer words improved dramatically, and her silent reading rate also improved from about 100 words per minute to about 160.

Rose's reading disability may have hurt her reading development and educational success less than the extreme psychological trauma of her childhood, teenage, and young adult years. Compared with adults like Joseph or Richard, Rose's reading disability seems quite moderate to mild. Despite her difficulties with phoneme awareness, word recognition, and spelling, Rose's ability as an adult to improve in decoding at the syllable level with coaching and practice suggests that she is able to use orthographic patterns to read more difficult words. (See Bruck, 1992, Adams, 1994, & Blachman, 1997, on this point concerning how much phoneme awareness is necessary to read.) Like the adults in Bruck's study, Rose has great difficulty with phoneme awareness at the level of manipulating individual sounds, but she is able to perform tasks involving onset and rime, or word families, and use that awareness to read. Typical of readers with word recognition difficulties, Rose's oral reading (where she can use context support) at 5 GE is considerably stronger than her isolated word recognition (where there is no context) at 3 GE.

Rose's story serves as a reminder that when analyzing adult readers, we need to bear in mind more than the social risk factors that may have contributed to their reading development; we also need to consider other aspects of their life histories that have shaped that development. But this is not easy or always possible when it comes to trauma and mental illness. Rose's ABE teachers made what proved to be effective decisions about her reading instruction based solely on her initial reading assessment and ongoing evaluations of her classroom progress, months before she had disclosed to them any of her psychiatric history. But without the success of her psychotherapy, it is unlikely that she would have made the progress in reading that she did. In any case, teachers and researchers need to know more about the effects (both long term and current) of psychiatric and emotional disorders and the medications used to treat them on the reading of adult learners.

Jissette, an Advanced ESOL Student in ABE

Jissette, a native speaker of Spanish who was born in Puerto Rico, was thirty-two years old at the time she was assessed in 1993. Like Rose, she was a divorced mother enrolled in a welfare-to-work program near

Boston. At the time of assessment, Jissette spoke fluent, grammatically correct English.

Jissette spent her early years in a small agricultural and marketing town in the mountains of Puerto Rico. There was no kindergarten, so she entered school in first grade at age six. She recalled that learning to read was easy for her: "I read like machine—sometimes too fast.... The teacher used to say I read so fast I 'ate the punctuation.'" When she was age eleven, her family moved to Boston, where she was enrolled in a regular (that is, not bilingual, transitional, or ESOL) fifth-grade class. "At first I couldn't understand a word the teacher or other kids said ... but twice a week they took me to this man who spoke Spanish, and that was the only part I liked. He started teaching me English." The ESOL tutoring continued through sixth grade, when Jissette's family moved to a neighborhood where a bilingual Spanish-English seventh-grade class was available. "I loved this class, and I got my first good grades since leaving Puerto Rico."

But then her family moved back to Puerto Rico, to a small city on the southwest coast of the island. "I had trouble again. The only class I got an 'A' in was English." Her family returned to the Boston area the next year, and Jissette enrolled in high school, where she enjoyed the ninth and tenth grades and developed an interest in modern dance. T hen, at age sixteen, halfway through eleventh grade, "I quit like a stupid!"—and she moved in with her boyfriend. At age seventeen she gave birth to her first child. Several years later she met and married another man, and they had four children together. When her husband was jailed for a drug offense, Jissette applied for welfare to support her children. After a period of what she called "deep depression," Jissette joined a Pentecostal church. She credits the church members with giving her the support she needed to divorce her husband and return to school. Her educational goals were to earn a GED and then enter a training program to become a bilingual medical secretary.

Here is Jissette's reading profile:

Rosner 3 GE
Word analysis 3 GE
Word recognition 7 GE
Spelling 3 GE
Oral reading 7 GE
Comprehension 6 GE
Oral vocabulary 4 GE

Jissette's profile closely matches the "ESOL" pattern that Chall (1994) described: her print skills are much stronger than her meaning-based skills. Her miscues in word recognition and oral reading occurred primarily on high-level unfamiliar words, and they reflected confusion between Spanish and English, especially on cognates (eemahgeenahteeve for imaginative) and Spanish/English close cognates (tronkeel for tranquil).

The only factor that might have placed Jissette at risk for early reading failure in English was that she grew up in a Spanish-speaking rather than English-speaking family. The quality of her schooling, from elementary school in Puerto Rico through high school in the United States, seems to have been adequate, but the emotionally disruptive and linguistically confusing effects of her family's moves back and forth between Puerto Rico and the United States during her middle school years could have placed her at risk. Indeed, these linguistic and cultural switches may have contributed to Jissette's current occasional phonics confusions between the two languages. (Not reading much in either language after leaving high school probably contributed as much to the appearance of these difficulties when she was tested as an adult.) Despite the fact that her first school encounter with English could have been better than a twice-weekly pullout for ESOL tutoring, that tutoring and her bilingual class the following year were ultimately sufficient to help Jissette transfer her Spanish decoding skills to English.

The key to Jissette's success that offset these risk factors and allowed her to become fluent and automatic at English word recognition is probably the fact that she had already become a fluent reader—"like a machine"—in Spanish. A rule of thumb among many experienced teachers of adult ESOL is that if a student has fifth-grade or better reading skills in another alphabetic language, acquiring the alphabetic principle in English is usually not difficult.[9] This coincides with findings from Collier and Thomas (1988) showing that immigrant children have little long-term difficulty acquiring literacy in English if they arrive after third grade. They often show persistent lags if taught to read first in English. The reverse implications of this rule are important as well. If a student does not have 5 GE skills in NALS Level 1, ESOL teachers will need to teach English phonics more deliberately, following the general recommendations of PRD for children: direct, systematic, sequential teaching of the sound-symbol correspondences coupled with generous amounts of reading in interesting text at the appropriate level of challenge.

Although Jissette's strong decoding skills transferred from Spanish to English, her English vocabulary lagged. Nevertheless, Jissette's initial 4 GE score in oral vocabulary may not have been a true reflection of her long-dormant English vocabulary knowledge. Since leaving high school at age sixteen, Jissette had been living almost entirely among Spanish speakers, and what little reading she had done during this time was also primarily in Spanish. As Sticht (1988) and others have cautioned, when adults have been away from reading, test taking, and school for many years, their initial assessment scores may be unduly low simply because they are a bit rusty. They tend to return to higher, more accurate basal levels of achievement after a few weeks back in school have helped to eliminate this rustiness. In addition, Jissette's 6 GE score in silent reading comprehension suggests that when given context, she is good at figuring out the meanings of unfamiliar words; this strongly suggests that her expressive oral vocabulary test score of 4 GE is lower than the receptive vocabulary knowledge available to her for reading connected text.

Indeed, once in adult education classes, Jissette showed herself to be an exemplary vocabulary learner. She manifested a strong interest in words, took careful notes on word meanings, and asked clarifying questions about the nuances and multiple uses of words she encountered in reading. With a minimal amount of direct instruction, Jissette was able to apply her strong Spanish print skills to make vocabulary associations between Spanish-English cognates. Again, her Spanish reading ability was the key, because Spanish-English cognates are much more apparent in print than in oral language.

Although her attendance was spotty because of her children's frequent bouts with asthma, Jissette, like Rose, made excellent progress in her ten months of classes. By the end of the school year, when she took a timed, norm-referenced test, she had raised her vocabulary to 6.4 GE and her reading comprehension to 8.7 GE. The following year Jissette enrolled in a GED program, after which she planned to exploit her Spanish-English skills by studying to become a bilingual medical secretary.

Terry, a Pre-GED Reader

Terry is an African American, born and raised in Boston. S he was twenty-eight years old, the mother of two, and attending a welfare-to-work program when she was assessed in 1993. Terry's parents were both literate: her father was a retired Coast Guard officer and worked for a car dealership, and her mother was a licensed practical nurse.

Terry did not recall having any problems with early reading in kindergarten or first grade. However, her teachers must have detected some difficulties, because she was referred for Title 1 help halfway through first grade.[10] She went to the school's resource room four times a week to work with the reading specialist. At first she was not happy about being pulled from class, "but I liked it once I got to know the teacher and realized I wasn't different from the other kids. The reading teacher was really nice." The Title 1 instruction must have been regarded as successful by her teachers, because it was discontinued after Terry's first-grade year.

Terry's father died when she was in third grade, but the family's economic situation remained sound because their house was paid for and her mother continued to work. Terry reports that she was successful and happy in school through fifth grade:

> Then the racial problems [the Boston school busing crisis of 1974] were starting. They were going to send me to ... [school] in South Boston, which my mother did not want, because they were stoning the buses down there. So she sent me to live with my aunt in the suburbs. It was nice there, but too "country" for me. There were like five black kids in the whole school. But I liked it. I got interested in volleyball and gymnastics and won some trophies.

Two years later, Terry returned to the Boston schools for seventh grade. In May of her eighth-grade year, her mother died of cancer. "I missed my eighth-grade graduation, but one teacher was very nice and took me and my sister out to dinner to make up for it."

Terry and her younger siblings moved in with a friend of their mother, and the following fall Terry entered high school. From the beginning, she recalls, "I got hooked up with the wrong people," and it was during this time that Terry began to have trouble with alcohol.

In the summer following her freshman year, at age fifteen, Terry discovered she was five months pregnant. She did not return to high school but moved in with her older brother, who was living in the family house. However, he was dealing drugs and treated her abusively, so after her son was born, Terry moved out, rented an apartment, and tried to survive on her parents' social security benefits and Aid for Families with Dependent Children (welfare).

In the intervening years, Terry lost and regained custody of her son and enrolled four separate times in ABE programs to try to get her GED. Eventually she moved to a city near Boston, where she now resides

with her first child and a second son born in 1992. She was no longer in contact with this child's father and supported both children with grants from welfare. Terry believed that her problems with alcohol kept her from earning her GED or acquiring job training: "Last year when my brother died of AIDS I got scared. Where has my life been going? When I'm not in school and [when I'm] doing nothing, my drinking gets worse and I get depressed."

In 1993 she and her younger son (who was diagnosed with lead poisoning) enrolled in an Even Start Family Literacy Program. Through that program Terry completed her GED in 1995. She planned to enroll in a culinary arts school to become a chef, an interest she acquired as a little girl from her father, who had been a chef in the Coast Guard.

Here is her reading profile:

Rosner 1 GE

Word analysis 3 GE

Word recognition 10 GE

Spelling 5 GE

Oral reading 12 GE

Comprehension 6 GE

Oral vocabulary 7 GE

Despite difficulties with reading in first grade, Terry's print skills were very strong in word analysis and word recognition and relatively strong in oral reading. Terry's surprisingly low phonological awareness and spelling scores may represent the persistence into adulthood of the phonological difficulties (see Bruck, 1992) that perhaps led her teachers to place her in Title 1 when she was a first grader.[11] Like Rose, Terry has an excellent grasp of basic phonics at the letter-sound level, possibly as a result of the Title 1 instruction. Terry's spelling miscues were usually phonetically correct, involving the omission of virtually silent letters (goverment) or reproducing what she heard in her own Boston accent, in which the letter r is often vestigial (excesize for exercise). Terry mastered the 12 GE oral reading passage, but closer scrutiny of her self-corrections, hesitations, and repetitions reveals her level of fluent, effortless reading to be somewhat lower, at about 7–8 GE.

Terry's 6 GE score in silent reading comprehension may be lower than her actual level of functioning. She narrowly missed answering a sufficient number of multiple-choice questions correctly to pass the 7 and 8 GE passages, but she gave excellent oral summaries of both passages,

and one month later she scored 8.9 GE on a timed test of silent reading comprehension. Terry's expressive vocabulary at 7 GE is typical of pre-GED learners, almost to the point of defining readers in this cluster. The vocabulary development of these students probably slowed after they left high school and did not grow much in literate, academic areas during the intervening years.

In summary, Terry appears to have begun first grade with a personal risk factor in the area of phonological processing (as revealed by her phonological awareness and spelling), but early intervention may have served to minimize its effects on her word recognition and fluency. Her adult reading development seems to be more the product of risk factors that caused her to leave school after ninth grade. This in turn was probably related to family tragedies and dislocations stemming from the deaths of her parents and the historical factor of the Boston school busing crisis of the mid–1970s. Students like Terry remind us that eliminating or minimizing early reading risk factors is not sufficient. Those with multiple risk factors will remain at risk throughout their school years.

In Strucker's 1995 study, the cluster of which Terry was a member had the highest percentage of high school dropouts—higher even than clusters of less skilled readers. aving become relatively strong decoders and fairly fluent readers coming out of third grade, readers like Terry fell behind in the vocabulary and content areas in middle school and high school, and eventually they dropped out. In these respects they closely resemble the young readers whom Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin described in The Reading Crisis (1990).

Generally the ABE system is quite successful at helping students with a profile like Terry's to earn their GED. In a year or less of work on content-area reading comprehension, math, and essay writing, these students usually gain the mixture of knowledge and test-taking skills they need to pass the GED. One area of concern, however, is that such students often just squeak through with low passing scores; the correspondingly low levels of skills they have attained may make it difficult for them to succeed in postsecondary education and thereby increase their earning power. In a finding that may relate the importance of adequate skills for minority students, Tyler, Murnane, and Willett (in press) concluded that "basic skills matter more in determining the earnings of nonwhites than they do in determining the earnings of young white dropouts."

Brian, an Advanced Adult Reader

Brian is white, and at the time of testing in 1994 he was forty-three years old and unmarried. Although he had graduated from high school in 1970, he was referred to a literacy program for reading assessment by a teacher running a computer accounting course for a local veterans' organization. She was concerned that his 10 GE score in word recognition on a screening test might indicate that he would have trouble understanding the course material. Further assessment revealed that although Brian had substantial spelling and phonics difficulties, he was nevertheless able to comprehend expository text at slightly above 12 GE. With minimal tutoring in writing, Brian completed the accounting course successfully.

Brian came from a literate family: both parents had graduated from high school, and his father was an electrician and his mother was a medical transcriptionist. Brian reported that he and his siblings were read to as children and that books were plentiful in his home when he was growing up. He did not attend kindergarten and began his first-grade year in parochial school, but he reported that he was kicked out for behavior problems and completed first grade in public school. Brian remembered that "reading was a little slow in the beginning... I had a lot of help from my mother, but I did learn to read OK." Spelling was especially difficult for him throughout school, he recalled, and it has remained a problem area for Brian in adult life.

When he was about to enter high school, his parents sent him to live with a childless uncle and aunt in Norfolk, Virginia. "My parents decided there was too much going on here," Brian explained. "It was the '60s and there were a lot of drugs around." He enjoyed living with his uncle and aunt, and he felt that he became a better reader in high school because of the challenging material he was given to read. He especially remembered how much he enjoyed reading Shakespeare's plays in eleventh grade. "When I turned 18 in 1970," he recalled, "the Vietnam War was on. I had a low number [in the draft lottery], so I enlisted. I spent five years in the Army, two tours in Vietnam. I first started reading on my own in the service because there was nothing to do a lot of the time. I found a series of action-adventure books that I really liked, and I read all of them."

After leaving the army, Brian tried his hand at a number of careers:

> *My MOS [military occupational specialty] was just infantry, so when I got out I wasn't qualified for anything. I started doing construction and*

a little carpentry. I went to community college for hotel management, but I didn't finish because the reading was too much. I went back to construction, tried roofing for a while, made storm doors and windows, and even tried starting my own small construction business.

Brian had always made a good living in construction, but he began to worry that once he got into his forties, he would begin to have serious health problems if he stayed in the building trades. It was then that he enrolled in and successfully completed his computer accounting course. He has since found a job in that field.

Although Brian is not an ABE student (he graduated from high school, and the job training program he was enrolled in was not part of the ABE system), he is typical of many adult readers who want to succeed in the postsecondary system. We have included his case study because his adult reading profile suggests that he had some early reading difficulties in first grade that were at least partly overcome with timely help from his mother. But notice Brian's report that in community college: "The reading was too much." This was a fairly common complaint of advanced post-GED level readers in Brian's cluster. Many had tried community college or four-year colleges but dropped out because they had trouble keeping up with the volume of reading and had trouble writing papers.

Here is his reading profile:

Rosner 2 GE

Word analysis 2 GE

Word recognition 10 GE

Spelling 4 GE

Oral reading 12 GE

Comprehension 12 GE

Oral vocabulary 12 GE

Brian's profile is marked by strong meaning-based skills and significantly weaker print-based skills: 12 GE or higher[12] in silent reading comprehension, oral vocabulary, and oral reading, but much weaker scores in phoneme awareness, word analysis, and spelling, and a slightly weaker score in word recognition. Brian's word analysis performance was very weak, especially at the level of individual letter sounds: he was able to supply correctly only thirteen of twenty-one consonant sounds in isolation. Although his oral reading was at least 12 GE, he barely met the minimum error criteria for the 10 GE and 12 GE passages. Moreover, his

reading was not fluent; it included numerous repetitions and self-corrections, and by 12 GE had become very slow and labored. Spelling mastery at GE 4 means that Brian was unable to spell correctly 5 GE words such as island, improve, listen, special, and neighbor.

Although Brian reported no formal diagnosis of reading disability in childhood, he resembles the "partially compensated dyslexics" described in a study of successful adult dyslexics (Fink, 1998). The partially compensated dyslexics in Fink's study averaged 16.9 GE (slightly above the fourth year of college) in silent reading comprehension. But on the Diagnostic Assessments in Reading (DAR, the same battery Brian received), 30 percent of this group were below 12 GE in word recognition, 56 percent were below 12 GE in oral reading accuracy, and 79 percent were below 12 GE in spelling. In an oral reading task of real-word passages that included occasional pseudowords, the compensated dyslexic group read at less than one-fourth the rate of normal controls in words per minute (Fink, 1998).

So if a reader like Brian is able to comprehend at or near college level, what is the problem? We need to take into account the actual demands of postsecondary education. Depending on the particular course of study, college programs can require hundreds of pages per week of "reading to learn the new," term papers, and written exams. Although Brian mastered 12 GE in oral reading, his many repetitions and self-corrections at levels 8 through 12 suggest that his level of fluent and effortless reading might be considerably below this, perhaps closer to 6–7 GE. This level may explain why Brian found the reading in his college courses to be "too much." With regard to Brian's 4 GE spelling, computer spell checkers (which were not available when he first tried college in the mid–1970s) could be of great assistance to him. But the function of spell checkers is to flag spelling errors after they have been made. At adult GE levels 4 and below, spellers such as Brian report that their spelling problems sometimes inhibit their expression; too often the content of what they write is influenced by what they can spell (Strucker, 1995).

In recent years colleges and community colleges have instituted programs in reading, writing, and study skills specifically designed to help adults (including former ABE students) make the transition to postsecondary education. (See Chapter Four for a full discussion of the issues involved in this transition.) These programs also try to help adults choose a field of study matched to their strengths. In this regard, the computer accounting training program was a good choice for Brian. Although it required some precise reading, the volume of that reading was relatively light. And in addition to accounting training, the program

allowed Brian to acquire touch-typing and word processing skills, including use of the spell checker, that may help him to write more fluently.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ADULT LITERACY PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The case studies reflect the wide variety of pathways that can lead to inadequate literacy levels in adulthood. Most of these adult poor readers suffered the risk factors identified in PRD as contributing to poor literacy outcomes, but their difficulties were also likely exacerbated by life circumstances not directly relevant to literacy (Rose, Terry, and Jissette) or by the cumulative effects of poor reading referred to as Matthew effects (Joseph and Richard). Now we turn to suggestions for improving adult literacy practice and research, based on the PRD findings.

Children's Reading Difficulties Illuminate Adult Literacy Learning

The case studies illustrate the fact that many of today's adult literacy students were yesterday's at-risk children. Moreover, for people like these adults, significant risk factors were present in the early stages of learning to read. Two recommendations for practitioners and researchers flow from this understanding:

- We should attempt to find out as much as possible about the childhood literacy experiences of adult literacy students, including parents' level of education, access to literacy activities, and history, if any, of reading problems.

- Because early reading difficulties can affect later reading ability (even for relatively successful readers at the pre-GED level), adult literacy practitioners need to be aware of the entire continuum of reading development, including the period of kindergarten to third grade covered in PRD. Practitioners need to be able to determine the effect a processing problem that originated in early reading may be having on the progress of an intermediate or GED-level adult reader. Components testing can help with this (Chall & Curtis, 1990; Roswell & Chall, 1994; Strucker, 1997). We need more research on what instructional approaches might work for these intermediate adult readers. Is it necessary for such students to review and master all of basic phonics, or are there shortcuts that would get better results?

  Even if the field of adult literacy were to adapt the PRD recommendations in early reading instruction to the needs of adult learners and address their processing difficulties, the field would still be

faced with some of the Matthew effects of early reading difficulties in the ABE and ESOL population. Specifically, if early processing problems adversely affected the middle school stages of reading to learn when these adults were children (Chall, 1983; Stanovich, 1986), then they tend to have difficulties in three related areas:

- Vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary acquisition skills

- Different genres of decontextualized written language

- Background knowledge acquired from school subjects

Although the ESOL population generally does not include a high percentage of people with phonologically based processing problems, because many of them were not able to complete high school (or even middle school), they also have difficulties in the above three areas, compounded by having to take on these problems in English.

Few research and intervention studies have been done on the degree to which this gap in skills and knowledge from middle school or high school must be addressed to allow for self-sustaining reading development in adult life and to allow these adults to read to learn at the postsecondary level. Do we have to fill in all or most of the missing skills and knowledge, or, as Sticht (1975, 1987) argued, can we help adults build their reading outward from a narrower, perhaps job-related foundation of skills and knowledge? These questions are not only important to adult educators; they are also central for middle and high school educators who teach at-risk adolescents.

Reading disabilities of presumed neurological origin played a dominant role in the severe reading difficulties of Joseph and Richard and appear to have contributed to a lesser extent to the more moderate-to-mild reading difficulties of Rose, Terry, and Jissette. What does the presence of such reading difficulties imply for instructional methods for ABE students? This question was addressed in a comprehensive and thoughtful review by Fowler and Scarborough (1993), who concluded that whether an adult reader meets various K–12 legal definitions of reading disabilities or learning disabilities may be of more theoretical than practical significance for instructional purposes. The authors reviewed the research on successful instructional approaches for children who were classified as reading disabled and children who are simply poor readers, and they also surveyed the more limited research on adult literacy students. The research on both children and adults indicated that poor readers who had been formally classified as reading disabled and poor readers who had not been so classified shared persistent difficulties with word recognition, fluency, and reading rate—so-called print skills.

Moreover, the authors reported that the approaches that were successful in remediating these word recognition difficulties among reading-disabled adults were also successful with other poor readers. Fowler and Scarborough also emphasized the need to assess the various components of reading so that adults with severe word recognition and fluency problems could be identified and receive instruction specifically designed to address those needs.[13]

Although we agree with Fowler and Scarborough's conclusions, we are concerned that some policymakers or practitioners who may not have read their report in its entirety may misinterpret the authors' observation that "it matters little [emphasis ours] whether a reading problem stemmed originally from a localized intrinsic limitation, from a general learning problem, or from inadequate educational opportunity" (1993, p. 77).

There are important instances in which we believe it matters more than "little." For example, in the case of adult beginning readers, it is true that the best-practice instructional methods may not differ; generally structured language approaches such as the Wilson Reading System and Orton-Gillingham are effective with students who are known to be reading disabled as well as with students for whom that determination has not been made. However, speaking practically, the pace of instruction and amount of repetition needed can vary quite a bit, depending on whether a student is severely phonologically disabled (like Joseph), somewhat less so (like Richard), or not phonologically disabled at all. If teachers are unaware of the issue of pace, they can give up too soon on an adult beginner who is making slow initial progress.[14]

With intermediate readers such as Rose or Terry, the issue of the pace of instruction is also important. Students at 6–8 GE who have word recognition difficulties may not progress as fast as those who do not have such difficulties. For example, such students may need more practice than others with polysyllabic words encountered in high school–level reading. The level at which they read fluently and effortlessly may be well below their tested level of silent reading comprehension. How are teachers to know this? As Fowler and Scarborough point out, ABE teachers need to understand the nature of reading disability, even though a formal diagnosis may not be possible or necessary for most of their students, if they are to teach the right stuff in the right way. The place to start is with assessments that go beyond the traditional group-administered silent reading tests. Such tests do not indicate whether someone who scores above 6 GE may still require instruction to improve word recognition, fluency, and rate. ABE programs often assume that all

students who enter scoring at 8 GE or above in silent reading are immediately ready to make rapid progress toward the GED in the traditional classes that address the five GED content areas. But for students who are reading disabled (such as those whose scores are depicted in Figure 2.1), the 8 GE score may represent peak functioning that may not improve until they are able to improve their reading accuracy and rate.

From the perspective of ABE students themselves, the question of whether they are reading disabled can be significant, quite apart from the issue of what instructional methods should be used with them. Adults older than age fifty may have grown up before K–12 systems formally diagnosed reading disabilities; unfortunately, in many cases they were assumed by the schools and their families to be mentally retarded, and they were treated as such. In addition, in some states learning-disabled adults are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if their learning disabilities can be documented. Students in welfare-to-work programs who are learning disabled can petition for more time to complete their education and job training. Similarly, reading-disabled students taking the GED may be eligible for accommodations in the administration of the tests. If ABE teachers are trained to recognize such reading difficulties, they may be able to advise students on whether they should seek a formal evaluation.

We are not suggesting that a formal learning disabilities apparatus similar to the K–12 special education bureaucracy be imported into ABE and adult ESOL. For the reasons we have discussed having to do with the difficulty of—to use Fowler and Scarborough's term— "disentangling" reading disabilities from other factors, the legalistic criteria of K–12 learning disabilities would be impossible to implement. This in itself is an important difference between K–12 reading and adult literacy. Moreover, many thoughtful researchers and practitioners have come to question the usefulness of these criteria and the expense and time needed to employ them in K–12 education. (See Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996, and Foorman, Francis, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1997, for reviews of this issue.)

In ABE and ESOL teachers are free to be what Mel Levine calls "phenomenologists"; that is, they can observe and diagnose a difficulty without having to name it or label the person who has the difficulty. They are then free to work with their student to address that difficulty using best instructional practice, without having to go through cumbersome and expensive classification procedures, some of which may

be based on outdated understandings of brain functioning (Levine, 1994; Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996).

We Need More Information About Middle School

PRD was limited to reviewing research about beginning readers and young children. There is a lot to learn about reading after grade 3, and it is possible that an entirely new set of reading challenges will emerge in the middle school years for some children who are helped to negotiate the difficulties of the early grades with better prevention and better instruction. Thus, it is clear that we need to continue to investigate the instructional strategies that work to promote comprehension, analysis, word learning, inference, and critical thinking for children in later elementary and secondary schools, and that such investigations will benefit adult literacy instruction.

Adult Literacy Populations Are Changing

One of the reasons we have attempted to articulate the relevance of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy to adult literacy is because of the dramatic shifts we are now seeing in adult literacy learners. The increased proportion of ESOL learners was noted above, but it should be pointed out as well that a very large proportion of this ESOL group will probably be non-or semiliterate in their first language. With the shifts in policies concerning welfare and work requirements for women, even those with young children, it is almost inevitable that adult literacy programs will be serving an increased proportion of women seeking job-related literacy skills. Many of these women will have well-developed but rusty literacy skills, while others may have left school after having achieved only rudimentary control over English literacy.

More Attention to Reading in Professional Development

A major recommendation of PRD is that preservice teacher education include both more and more thoughtful attention to reading; it is argued that to teach reading effectively, a teacher would need to understand something about language acquisition, linguistics, rhetoric, bilingualism, and orthographic systems as well as pedagogical methods. It is further recommended that professional development in this area be delivered in such a way that this full variety of topics can be addressed, thereby giving the various adults (classroom teacher, reading specialist, tutor, ESOL teacher, and so forth) who deal with any child learner a coherent view of literacy development and of the child's needs. The call for elevated standards, strengthened professional development, and more

coherent systems of instruction could also be extended to those working with the adult learner. In fact, credentialing of adult literacy instructors is typically not required, nor are there widely recognized programs of professional preparation for adult literacy teachers. Some adult literacy practitioners are, of course, credentialed K–12 teachers, but they may still have had rather little direct instruction in how people learn to read and none in how to address the learning needs of adults.

Social as Well as Academic Factors Play a Role

One of the lessons of the case studies we have presented, and one understood as well by every adult literacy teacher, is the degree to which progress toward high-level literacy for adults is threatened by their life circumstances: the difficulties they have attending class regularly and finding time to study outside class and the worries induced by familial disruption, illness, unemployment, residential uncertainty, and other such factors. These inevitably interfere with an optimal focus on learning to read. We cannot expect to solve the problems of adult literacy achievement by focusing exclusively on better methods for teaching reading. Improving the quality of adult learners' lives more broadly is not only socially responsible but necessary.

WHAT NEXT?

We hope that this summary of a report focused on child literacy learners will be of interest to adult literacy practitioners because the descriptions of literacy development, risk factors, and opportunities to learn have direct relevance to their work. It would be very useful to have a second report, analogous to PRD, focusing on the questions of risk, development, and instruction for learners in the middle grades and beyond. Such a report would raise new issues related to the older learners' special needs for support of vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and ways of using literacy in seeking and transmitting knowledge. Even if such a study is not completed, though, we believe that certain extrapolations can be made from the information already gathered and reviewed and that this information should form a central core of content in the professional development of adult literacy teachers.

Appendix: The Tests Used

The Rosner in the score profiles refers to the Test of Auditory Awareness Skills (Rosner, 1975), a brief assessment of phonological awareness that begins by asking the respondent to perform a series of increasingly difficult tasks. First, he or she is asked to delete one word from two-word compound words, then syllables, then initial consonant sounds, then final

consonant sounds, and finally to delete a single sound from a consonant blend. The GE scores reported for this test are based on Rosner's published norms for the various levels of task difficulty.

The cluster analysis of the 120 students for both the Rosner and various Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) components was based not on GE scores but on standardized scores. The DAR (Roswell & Chall, 1992) was developed for use with adults or children based on assessment practices used in the Harvard Reading Laboratory and the Harvard Adult Literacy Initiative.

The DAR Word Analysis Test assesses basic phonics up to about the third-grade level, using ninety-two items, including a respondent's ability to produce the consonant sounds and his or her skill at reading consonant blends, short vowels in isolation and in short words, the rule of silent e, and vowel digraphs. The GE scores were extrapolated from the similar Rowell-Chall Test of Word Analysis Skills, which gives estimates of the grades at which students normally acquire the various skills assessed on both tests.

DAR word recognition measures word reading on graded word lists, from the beginning of first grade (1–1) through 12 GE. The DAR spelling, oral reading (graded short passages), and silent reading comprehension (short graded passages followed by questions and an oral summary) measures are criterion-referenced assessments of increasing difficulty. DAR word meaning is an expressive vocabulary test (similar to the WAIS-R) in which the respondent is asked to define groups of increasingly more difficult words.

NOTES

1. To master the alphabetic principle is to understand that letters and combinations of letters correspond in a systematic way to the words and syllables of spoken language.

2. We will use the term grade equivalent (GE) when discussing adults. However, to say that an adult "reads at 5 GE" does not necessarily imply that he "reads like an average fifth–grade child." In vocabulary, for example, the adult may know the meanings of more words in areas pertaining to adult work life and psychological development than a fifth grader would, but the adult may not have learned or may not remember the meanings of some words associated with fifth–grade social studies or science. In the area of reading rate, average fifth graders can read about 150 words per minute with comprehension (Harris & Sipay, 1990), but many adult readers at 5 GE read more slowly. See also Pratt and Brady (1988) on the differences between the reading of adult literacy students and of age–matched children.

3. The ARCS randomly sampled approximately six hundred students enrolled in ABE classes and four hundred students enrolled in ESOL classes in twenty–seven learning centers in Texas, Tennessee, and six states in the Northeast. The students were tested with a battery of reading tests, and those who spoke Spanish also were tested in

Spanish reading. For logistical reasons, no students from corrections were included, nor were students participating in programs taught by volunteers.

4. The NALS assessed prose, document, and quantitative literacy using simulated real-world tasks of increasing difficulty and complexity in a sample of approximately twenty-six thousand adults, ages sixteen to sixty-five. NALS levels progressed from the most basic, Level 1, through the most difficult, Level 5. By way of illustration, prose literacy tasks at Level 1 "require the reader to read relatively short text to locate a single piece of information." Level 2 prose literacy tasks require in part "low-level inferences" and the ability to "integrate two or more pieces of information" (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993).

5. Scholes (1991) also found that on this assessment, ESOL learners outperformed reading-disabled native speakers.

6. The Rosner is a test of phonological awareness including items that require phoneme deletion.

7. The method of teaching reading that Joseph described is one that Horace Mann railed against in the 1830s (Adams, 1994). It is particularly disastrous because it can lead children to think that there is a direct correspondence between the letter names in English and their sounds. To this day some adults from rural areas of the English-speaking Caribbean countries report having been taught with this method.

8. The highest extrapolated score possible for both phonemic awareness and word analysis is 3 GE.

9. Why this rule holds and under what circumstances and for which alphabetic languages would be important questions to explore through further research on adults.

10. Title 1, also called Chapter 1 at times, refers to special federal funding available to schools with a high proportion of children living in poverty.

11. Ten other adults in Strucker's 1995 study showed a similar pattern of very weak phonological awareness with very strong word recognition and oral reading fluency. Nine reported they had received early intervention in reading. This pattern is now being studied in larger samples of adult learners to estimate its prevalence and to learn what factors may contribute to it.

12. We describe his score as 12 GE or higher because the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading have a ceiling of 12 GE.

13. Strucker (1997) made a similar point.

14. Beginners who are not phonologically disabled are admittedly rare among learners who attended school in the United States. But ABE teachers occasionally meet students from some West African nations or parts of the English-speaking Caribbean who are not literate in any language but experience few difficulties learning to decode.

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* Appendix – Methodology (pp. 109-111); and Chapter 4 – Ann: "I Just Didn't Want to Make Trouble" (pp. 34-41). Copyright © 1997 by Teachers College Press, Columbia University. Reprinted with permission. To purchase copies of this book, visit Teachers College Press on the web at www.teacherscollege.com.

METHODOLOGY

This book results from a secondary analysis of some of the data originally collected to evaluate Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LVNYC) (Fingeret & Danin, 1991). The purpose of the original study was to develop insight into the impact, for students, of their participation in Literacy Volunteers of New York City in 1990. This was examined in terms of (1) changes in literacy skills; (2) changes in involvement in literacy practices in students' lives; and (3) changes in self-concept related to literacy development. Since the main emphasis was program impact on students, we chose to look at the volunteers and the larger organization primarily in terms of the students' experiences. The original study focused on the program; this book and the secondary analysis focus more directly on the students themselves. In the course of the original study we became particularly intrigued by learners' differing stories of change; this secondary analysis develops additional insights into individual learners' processes of change and presents a framework for change that we hope will be useful to the literacy education field.

Original Evaluation Methodology

Methods to evaluate any program are determined by the stated goals of the program, the purpose of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the audience(s) for the evaluation. In 1990, at the time of the original data collection, LVNYC identified itself as committed to student-centered learning that would enhance students' literacy skills as well as have an impact on their self-esteem. Overall, the program hoped to help students create a higher quality of life for themselves and their families. It attempted to reach those goals primarily through literacy instruction, student services, and the Student Leadership Program.

In keeping with the need to access multiple perspectives at multiple sites and to gather data that would help us connect students' experiences with program impacts, the study was primarily qualitative. Qualitative methods provide a holistic view and reveal the program in as naturalistic way as possible. This is not to say that the evaluation is "value-free" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), but that analysis is inductive rather than deductive. Qualitative research is descriptive and is concerned with process as well as outcome (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1980).

All evaluation research must meet certain criteria for rigorous and systematic investigation in order to be useful. Qualitative inquiry must meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility of findings and interpretations can most likely be ensured by prolonged engagement on-site, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. The remaining criteria depend, to a large extent, on establishing credibility. The evaluation, by design, met these criteria.

The evaluation project was completed in three phases: (1) planning, (2) data collection, and (3) data analysis and validation. During the planning phase, the Principal Investigator met with the staff, Executive Director, program committee of the board, and Student Advocates (former students on staff in the central office who form the Student Leadership Team) to identify the evaluation questions and goals. The Advisory Committee was established to work with the evaluators to provide input on the evaluation process and to serve as a check on credibility. The Advisory Committee consisted of three staff members, two students, one tutor, and two board members.

The field research team consisted of the Principal Investigator, the Project Director, and three on-site fieldworkers. The Principal Investigator and/or Project Director met with the evaluation Advisory Committee during each of the three phases and consulted with individual committee members as needed during the project. They also met with the Executive Director and/or with the Director of Education about once a month during data collection and preliminary analysis to ensure open communication. These various meetings are examples of peer debriefing and member checking, which are necessary to establish credibility.

Data Collection. We used open-ended focus group interviews, individual interviews, and observation as the main data collection methods. Additional data included students' demographic information, standardized test scores, and writing samples.

ANN: "I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE TROUBLE"

Ann grew up in rural southwest Virginia during the 1930s. Her father, like many African Americans in the area at that time, was a field worker and moved the family from one farm to another as work became available. Depending on where they were living, Ann and her sisters walked as far as four miles to school. Sometimes they got to school only because the teacher stopped by in the morning to offer them a ride. More often than not, however, Ann and her sisters were not allowed to go to school even if they had the means to get there. "You didn't need it on the farm" is what Ann remembers her father saying about education. Based on his ability to count, Ann always assumed that her father had received at least some education. Even so, he did not think that education particularly mattered for his daughters. He used to say that if "he could make it then we could make it," Ann remembers. When interviewed for this study, Ann was 65, recently retired, and a great-grandmother living in New York City. Despite the passing of time, she held resentment toward her father. According to Ann, it "seemed like he didn't try to make a way for us…And like today, my sister…he dead God bless him…she hates him today for that."

Prior Schooling: "I Just Stopped"

At 16, Ann moved to Baltimore, where she had a few cousins and friends. Her intent was to finish high school there but she quickly discovered that she was far behind the other students. Also, her new class had 20 students and only one teacher. It was hard for her to follow everything that the teacher wrote on the blackboard and she felt that she never received the extra assistance needed in order to catch up with the other students. Regardless of what she encountered as a new student trying to make up for lost time, the real truth, she believes, is that she just quit learning. "I had men and boys in my mind so I just stopped." Still a teenager, Ann quit high school, married, and started a family. In addition to raising three children, she worked 40 years in factory production.

Throughout most of her adult life, Ann was resigned to the notion that her own education was essentially an opportunity lost. She recognized but avoided subsequent opportunities to develop her literacy ability, not wanting to experience the embarrassment that had become part and parcel of her reading and writing difficulty. To illustrate this, Ann recalled her experience as a parent trying to help her son with schoolwork. During a homework session when he was about 11 years old, Ann's son realized that his mother couldn't read. She remembers him saying to her, "Mommy, I'll help you." But Ann didn't take the

opportunity. She explains, "I was too embarrassed, you know. But [he] would have helped me. I could have learned right along with him."

Ann first learned about Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LVNYC) on television when she was 62 years old. Coincidentally, her two sisters back in Virginia had become involved in a literacy program at about that same time. More significantly, Ann's friend Felicia, who had been trying to find a home tutor for Ann, began to encourage Ann to attend LVNYC. Ann refers to Felicia as her "goddaughter." Felicia's husband was attending LVNYC, and Felicia gave the phone number to Ann. However, Ann says, "I just kept putting it off....I kept saying I'm not ready for this. But all the time I wanted this, you know."

Felicia was a vital source of assistance, as Ann explains: "She do a lot of things for me. Like she was taking me shopping and stuff, you know, with the car. She even carried me down South to see my mother and them, I think about three years ago." When Ann put off calling LVNYC, Felicia threatened to stop helping her; eventually, Felicia agreed to make the initial phone call and arrange Ann's first meeting with the program staff. Felicia also agreed to drive Ann to the classes each week if necessary. As it turned out, Ann was able to walk to a program offered near her apartment in Brooklyn. At the time she was interviewed for this study, Ann had been attending the program for three years.

Life Inside the Program: "There Are So Many Words That I'm Missing"

Ann rarely used to talk to anyone about her reading difficulty. Furthermore, before entering the literacy program, she never considered that there might be other adults who had similar problems. Having lived most of her life feeling uniquely afflicted, Ann was relieved to meet others like herself: I was so embarrassed, feeling so bad about it because I never talked about it to other people, you know, and [I was] always in the closet. When I came here I was so shocked to see so many young people out here with the same thing. You can't talk about me. I can't talk about you. We are all here for the same thing and that's why I feel so comfortable.

When she first started the program, Ann was tested to determine her reading level and then assigned to a tutor. Initially, she and one other student shared a tutor. Soon, however, they were joined by four or five more students and a second tutor. As Ann gained experience as an adult student, she accumulated ways to understand and explain her reading progress. Instructional programs for adults are organized differently than schools, she explains. "Some kids go to school 20 years…9 months a year for 6 hours a day." LVNYC offers Ann instruction only two hours a

day, two days a week. She says that learning to read at this pace may take a long time. As she puts its, it may take "two years, three years, four years for me to get out of here." From another perspective, Ann believes that her "brain" can hold only so much information. This belief affords her an explanation for why the responsibilities of adulthood seem to interfere with her ability to retain what she learns in the program.

> *See, we got so much in our minds, so much in our brains raising children, getting married, making a living and all of that. It's so hard to put anything else in there because it's so hard for me to hold things....I can't concentrate on my brain enough to hold it in. You know when you're young you can just keep it in and spell it and you know [it]....I'm trying to learn this and trying to cook dinner. I'm trying to shop. All that's in my mind you know. It's too much.*

Sometimes Ann attends the program more regularly than other times. She notices that her attendance affects the pace of her learning. She remarked on a few occasions to her interviewer that she "would have been further in this but I slacked off myself…I have to get back in the speed because I think I should have been more advanced than I am, but I slacked up myself." These remarks reveal a third way that Ann understands her progress, this time as it relates to her drive and self-discipline.

On any given day, Ann's tutoring group might work with a newspaper designed especially for new readers. Everyone takes a turn reading out loud. Then group members talk about what they have read and how they feel about it. They work together by helping one another with difficult words. If Ann knows a word that someone else doesn't, for instance, she will just say it out loud.

Ann measures her need for learning in terms of "words." There are words she knows, and words she doesn't know. She speaks of words that others know, and of words that she needs to know. To Ann, reading is recognizing individual words and knowing how to spell them without having to ask for help. Also, for Ann, the learning process is marked by a beginning and an end. She says, "I want to start from the beginning because there are so many words that I'm missing." Ann will know that she has reached the end of her studies when she can read a newspaper headline—not because this is necessarily a personal goal she set for herself. but because she has somehow gotten the idea that the program requires all students to read the newspaper before they leave the program. Stating her goals in a more personalized way, Ann wants to be able to pick up a book and "just read it and read it and read it." She also

looks forward to being able to write a letter when she feels like it without having to ask anyone for help with spelling.

Because of the way Ann understands the process of learning to read, it makes sense to her that her tutors would tell her the words she doesn't know as she encounters them. She says that learning a new word this way is encouraging. During silent reading, however, tutors at LVNYC encourage focus on meaning rather than on decoding discrete words. They ask students to finish reading their selection before receiving help. In the meantime, students focus on figuring out troublesome words based on the context of the passage. According to Ann, she gets "disgusted" when she has to sit for 20 minutes or an hour waiting for someone to help her with a word. She explains, "You don't know what it is, you keep sitting there looking at that word. Tell me this word then I can go onto the next word. It makes a big difference. People don't realize that." Ann experiences similar frustration when it comes to writing:

> You can't tell me to start writing a letter here and I don't know how to spell "dear." So, you got to tell me how to spell it. "Just figure out how it should go." That's what they said. I said I can't figure how it should go. If I know that I would stay home and do it, right?

"They're getting me to work, that's for sure," Ann says about her tutors. She is referring to the fact that the tutors want Ann to try and write "a little something" every day and to "read something long." Ann has set an additional personal goal for herself, which is to "learn two new words" each day so that maybe writing will become easier for her. She explained the difficulty she experiences trying to write: "It's a lot of little words I can't spell without looking at them. But I done looked at them a lot and when I do see them I know what it is. And I am looking at it, I can spell it. But to close the book and spell it, I find it hard."

Ann struggles with learning to spell even short words correctly but she enjoys the techniques her tutors use to try to and help her. She likes her tutors' use of large newsprint paper to demonstrate writing, which is then posted on the walls. She also likes the use of the blackboard. Ann explains that her tutors "go over and over" everything, explaining patiently and breaking tasks down into smaller steps that Ann finds comfortable.

Ann thinks of her tutoring group as a "nice group"; the members are friendly to one another and they often talk with each other about personal things in addition to reading. "Like me and Dora," Ann explains, "We talk about numbers a lot. [We] play numbers, you

know…so it's relaxing." Through her years of work experience she has learned that on the job, you can talk to somebody once in awhile and say something and smile. The work goes better." Likewise, she values the informal conversation that goes on in her tutoring group. It contributes to her sense of confidence and bolsters her willingness to try new things. Ann feels that if she's not comfortable with the members of her group, it's like "exposing yourself…and it's not too good." In addition to the friendly rapport that has developed among members of her group, she likes the way everyone works interdependently. "It's like you're helping each other," Ann says. "Like if you get hung up on a sentence…I'll say it, and that keeps them going before the tutor say helps a lot."

Ann has had the opportunity to work with a few different tutors since she started the program and she's decided that "the spirit have to agree with them…If the spirit don't agree…it's no good." She readily compares the personalities and teaching styles of the various tutors she has worked with. Around one tutor in particular, Ann experienced a lot of stress because, as she says:

> *It seemed like I wasn't getting no place. She kept me just reading. She'd get a book or something and she'd tell me to read something else and mark it and just, you know, but I'm going crazy. I said I can sit at home and do this. Figure out what that next word is. It was too much, I couldn't deal with it.*

Ann contrasts this tutor with another who "wouldn't only answer the question, but most of the time he explained what it meant. And sometime he would go and get the dictionary to let you know the difference between this and that." This is the tutoring approach she describes as most beneficial.

When Ann feels that she's not moving ahead she is inclined to stop attending the program for periods of time. As she describes herself, she has never been the kind of program participant who speaks out about what; he likes and what she doesn't like in the way of instruction. This may have to do with the fact that Ann, like others who attend the program, is aware that the tutors are volunteers. Students don't always think it is within their right to criticize people who are already giving their time and "doing the best they can." The last time she felt a lot of frustration over the way things were going with her tutor, Ann remembers, "I just didn't want to make trouble. I didn't want to say nothing because…sometimes she…don't get me wrong, she was a nice person, but I don't know…I don't think she really know how to do it." Ann wasn't at peace with her decision to stay silent, however. She

admits, "That's what got me disgusted, I didn't say nothing…I couldn't say nothing because she was a nice person, you know."

Life Outside the Program: "I Would Always Stay in the Background"

When Ann retired from her job after 40 years, she felt like a load had been lifted from her shoulders. For all those years she had worked to hide her literacy problem from co-workers and supervisors:

> *It's fortunate, I never got a position that I had to do a lot of writing. And when a position would come up for me to take it, because I was the seniorest, I refused it...I was afraid it would be reading and writing and I couldn't do it so I would always stay in the background and let somebody else take it....All that burden down on you....I'm glad the hard stuff is over.*

Her job did require some counting because at the end of the day she had to "tell a machine" how much work she had produced. Ann describes handling this aspect of the work with relative comfort. She would keep a running count in her head all day rather than make notes to herself. Sometimes she admits pretending that she was in too big of a hurry to do the daily count. "Come pick this for me, girl, I'm in a hurry," Ann would say to one of her co-workers in order to avoid the counting process. "She'd say, 'Oh Ann'…then she'd do it."

Ann never makes a grocery list. She memorizes what she needs to buy and she looks at the pictures on food labels to help her decide if she is buying the right item. In other cases, she is familiar with the package design of common items so she doesn't have to worry about shopping mistakes. Recently, Ann's grandson came to live with her and he doesn't eat pork. This dietary restriction has posed a new challenge for Ann because it forces her to read the word "pork" on food labels. She says, "Now I really have to look at [the label]. I really have to watch what I'm buying…I catch myself you know and sometime I go to grab something and it has pork in it. And I have to look at it and take it back." Being in the program has helped to increase Ann's level of confidence as she shops:

> *I find myself comfortable now looking at the labels. I used to wonder and say what? and really study you know and stumble over the labels…for the pork and stuff…what it was made of and all that stuff. And now I can really understand more and I just [am] more comfortable doing that. I really watch the labels now, you know.*

Ann's tutors have encouraged her to try making a grocery list but Ann is not persuaded by the idea that a shopping list might make her life

easier. She has learned over the years that she can manage the list in her head well enough. She says, for instance, "I don't care if I get $100 for groceries. I don't make the list." She can, however, imagine that a shopping list might make for a good spelling exercise. And so, she says, "I'm going to get into that."

When asked about the kinds of reading and writing she does at home, Ann responds with the language of schooling. "That's my problem, I don't do it. If I study more at home and write, I would be more advanced. She spends most of her time watching television and she says, "It's kind of hard for me to write and watch TV, too, you know." She says,

> *Sometime I don't do it all day…pick up a pencil all day. But I will read something, you know, a little something. But not writing everyday like I should. And that's not good because they tell you to write something every day or read. So I know that's not what I'm supposed to do. I should do more. I say "after this story, after this story," and you know, that's it.*

When Ann is at home and she comes across a word she does not know, she will write it down on a scrap of paper and then take it to her next tutoring session. "But," she says emphatically, "I won't ask nobody at home." Ann tries to understand the reason behind this:

> *I don't know why really, I just can't do it. I feel shame or something. I don't know, I guess [it's] just me…I just go on and stumble over it or either write it down until I come here and then ask what it is…I don't want to figure it out. That's why I come here.*

Old Relationships and New Practices: "Coming Out of the Closet, They Call it"

Ann observes that her relationships have changed a little bit as her independence around literacy tasks has increased. Since becoming involved in the program, she feels her relationships with family, and friends like Felicia, are getting "better and better." She reports that she is now able to read some letters and other items received in the mail. "That really took a burden off me. It makes me happy, it makes me feel good....It really makes a big difference," she says. She also talks about reading short articles in a newspaper she subscribes to, called *The Big Red*. "Two years ago, I couldn't even do this," she shares excitedly.

Ann's children are supportive of her participation in LVNYC and they share the excitement she feels around her progress. She says that her

son is "proud of me now that I'm going to school…because I'm going to school and getting better than I was." Ann feels that her relationship with her daughter has changed somewhat since she has been in the program because she no longer has to ask her to help with many "minor things." Her daughter had been the one in the family to handle all the banking, fill out forms when necessary, and pay the bills. Ann says "Thank God for that," but now Ann is able to fill out parts of some forms, at least. Ann is unclear about just how much of the family paperwork she has taken on herself, but every time she does not have to ask for assistance, she feels like she is relieved of a burden.

Taking Literacy Skills Home

Purcell-Gates, V., Degener, S., Jacobson, E., & Soler, M. (2001). Taking literacy skills home. *Focus on Basics, 4*(D), 19–22.

"Before, I would get letters from the children's school and I needed someone [to] read them to me in order to know what they were asking me to do. Now I don't need it."

"I can write a check now."

"I can look at a map now and use road signs."

"I just started using calendars and appointment books."

"I can pick up a newspaper and read the headline now."

"Now I can pick up my Bible, and I can read a scripture."

"I can go to a lunch counter and look on the bulletin board and read it now."

These are just a few of the comments made by adult literacy students who participated in a National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)-sponsored study, Literacy Practice of Adult Learners (LPALS). The study looked at changes in the literacy practices of adults as a result of attending adult literacy classes. Results show that students who participate in classes in which real-life literacy activities and texts are used increase the frequency with which they read and write in their daily lives. Such learners also expand the variety of texts they read and write outside of school. This is in comparison to results in students who participate in classes with fewer or no real-life literacy activities and texts.

By looking at these changes, LPALS was measuring an important—one could argue that it is the most important—outcome of adult literacy instruction: the actual application of newly learned literacy skills. Rather than inferring from other outcome measures, such as achievement tests, that literacy skills are applied in day-to-day life, this study looked at those applications directly. It looked at whether or not the adult learners actually use their new literacy skills to achieve their own personal goals, meet their own needs, and participate more fully in their personal and family life.

The significance of the results goes beyond the adult learners to encompass issues of intergenerational literacy success and failure. Children who grow up in homes where adults read and write more, and read and write more types of texts (e.g., coupons, recipes,

correspondence, documents, magazine articles, books, etc.) learn more about the conceptual bases of reading and writing than those in homes where adults read and write less. Children who begin school with higher levels of literacy knowledge and familiarity are more successful at learning to read and write.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The LPALS research team collected data on out-of-school literacy practices from 173 adults attending 83 different classes across the United States. The adult literacy students represented the range of students in the various types of adult literacy classes in the United States today. They were both native-born and foreign-born and ranged in age from 18 to 68 years. They were currently learning in classes or in tutorial arrangements that reflected a range of configurations: adult basic education (ABE), preparation for tests of General Educational Development (GED), family literacy, Evenstart, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Upon beginning the classes they were attending, the literacy levels of the participants ranged from preliterate (19.1%) to a level of 11th grade and up (7.5%). The majority of the students were reported by their teachers to be reading around the fourth to seventh grade levels (31.2%) when they first began attending the class involved in the study. Women made up 70% of the sample.

DIMENSIONS OF INSTRUCTION

To relate changes in adult literacy students' literacy practices to the types of instruction they were receiving, the student participants and their current literacy class teachers were recruited to the study together. Teachers of adult literacy volunteered for the project in response to calls put out through the NCSALL network as well as through contacts known to members of the research team. A class, or site, was defined as one teacher and at least one student working together. Thus, among the 83 classes, about one-third of them were configured as tutor-tutee, a common instructional approach in adult basic education.

The LPALS team thought that two dimensions of adult literacy instruction might relate to change in literacy practice. The first was authenticity of instruction, or how close the activities and texts used in the class are to actual literacy practice in the world outside of formal schooling. The second dimension was the degree of collaboration that existed between the students and the teachers: the degree to which students and teachers share decision-making for all aspects of their program, including assessment, goal-setting, activities, texts, and program governance. These two dimensions were chosen because they

Readings Assigned for Session Two

represent best practice among many adult literacy theorists, researchers, and practitioners, and a logical argument can be made for their relationship to literacy practice change among students. Many believe that if adult students are given the opportunity to request instruction around specific texts and activities that are personally important and relevant to them, if they feel a sense of ownership in their schooling, and if they learn the skills of reading and writing through reading and writing real-world texts for real-world purposes, they will be more likely to apply their reading and writing abilities in their lives outside of school. Examples of real life texts include newspapers, driver's license manuals, recipes; real-world purposes include reading newspapers to learn about the news, reading recipes in order to actually cook something. (For a fuller description, see Focus on Basics, 2B, pp. 11-14, and 3D, pp. 26-27.)

Each class in the study was assigned a score that reflected the class's location along a continuum of practice for each dimension. For authenticity, the four possible scores were 1) highly authentic; 2) somewhat authentic; 3) somewhat school-only; 4) highly school-only. For collaboration, the four possible scores were 1) highly collaborative; 2) somewhat collaborative; 3) somewhat teacher-directed; 4) highly teacher-directed. These scores were used in the subsequent analysis.

Using Authentic Materials: Karen

Karen teaches an adult literacy class to a group of women in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in a large city. Issues that arise in the neighborhood often influence the direction that the class goes on any given day. For example, one day some of the students came to class very disturbed. A young girl in the neighborhood had been assaulted. The learners felt that the police, the school, and the community were being very passive about the case. Many women in the class have daughters about the same age as the assault victim, and as they learned more about the case, they, too, became very upset. Karen realized that this issue really mattered to the students, so she devoted much of the next week's instruction to learning more about this case. She brought in different newspapers that covered the case for the students to read and discuss. The class decided to write a letter to the editor about the incident. As the class wrote the letter together, Karen took the opportunity to teach a short lesson on writing a business letter, as well as to go over some spelling patterns. Karen also proposed that the class do some research on issues of women's rights and safety.

Using the Internet as well as other resources, the class spent much time reading about and discussing these issues. At the same time, Karen pulled out unfamiliar vocabulary words from the different resources to work on with the students. Karen likes the fact that she can cover the reading and writing skills that her students need within a context that interests and motivates her students.

CHANGE

Data collectors visited the volunteer participants in their homes at the beginning of their participation in literacy class and at the end. They asked if students were reading or writing any new types of material since they started attending the literacy class they were currently attending (and on which data had been collected). This information was gathered with the use of a structured questionnaire that asked questions about 50 different literacy practices. The data collector then sent the completed questionnaire to the research office for coding. Each participant was paid $10 per interview.

**Using Authentic Materials:
Peter & Christine**

Peter and Christine teach an adult basic education class in a large working- class community 40 miles from a large city. The students in their class come from a wide range of backgrounds and they all read at different levels.   One of Peter and Christine's major challenges is using materials and activities that reflect the lives of all of their learners. They address this challenge by providing a lot of class time for students to explore their own interests and needs. For example, they have a computer teacher come in once a week to work with individual students on exploring the Internet. The students choose what topics they would like to learn more about, and the computer teacher helps them to access that information. One student wanted to learn more about child support and the laws that enforce payment of child support. The time she spent researching on the Internet helped this student to learn about the laws and also find available resources for helping her to obtain back payments from her ex-husband. Peter and Christine also provide time during each class for students to bring in materials they want to read or write. For instance, one student is trying to upgrade his trucking license, and to do so he needs to pass a test. He brings the test preparation manual to class each night to read during this time. Another student uses the time to write letters to her family in El Salvador. Peter and Christine, as well as a couple of tutors, provide assistance to the students, as needed, during this time. While much of the class time is spent doing whole class activities, such as reading novels or sharing their writing, the students also appreciate the time they have to explore materials of individual, personal interest to them.

Results showed that the degree of authenticity in adult literacy instruction had a moderate statistically significant effect on literacy practice change. This was true after controlling for the other factors that also showed independent significant effects on literacy practice change. These factors included literacy level of the student when beginning the program; number of days the student had attended the program; and the non-ESOL status of the student. The degree of collaboration between students and teachers showed no relationship with literacy practice change.

Results showed that the degree of authenticity in adult literacy instruction had a moderate statistically significant effect on literacy practice change. This was true after controlling for the other factors that also showed independent significant effects on literacy practice change. These factors included literacy level of the student when beginning the program; number of days the student had attended the program; and the non-ESOL status of the student. The degree of collaboration between students and teachers showed no relationship with literacy practice change.

Independent effects are those effects that, after controlling for all other variables that were statistically significantly related to change in literacy practice, is also significantly related to change in literacy practice. The strongest independent effect was students' literacy level when they began the classes. The lower the literacy level at the beginning, the greater the change in literacy practices reported by students. This makes intuitive sense: students who are unable to read or write much at all will not be able to engage in many outside-of-school literacy practices. However, as they gain skills, they will begin to use those skills for many of the basic literacy practices—reading signs, food labels, and others—that, across all of our participants, were for the most part already engaged in by the time students began their reading classes.

Complementing this effect was the fact that the longer the students had attended their classes, the more change in literacy practices they reported. Again, this makes intuitive sense if one concludes that low-skilled students will begin to pick up basic literacy practices and then add to them over time as their skill continues to increase.

The negative effect of ESOL status on change in literacy practices means that ESOL students enrolled in ESOL classes were less likely to report changes in literacy practices than were other students. This is probably because many of the ESOL students in the participant pool were already engaging in many literacy practices in their native languages by the time they began their ESOL classes, and focused instead on learning to read and write in English. The final participant pool included relatively few ESOL students so this effect is probably more of an artifact of the data-gathering for this study rather than a finding that one would wish to generalize to all ESOL students, according to Purcell-Gates.

AUTHENTIC LITERACY INSTRUCTION

These results provide empirical justification for teachers to include real-life literacy activities and texts in their classes. What do these classes look like that do include authentic literacy instruction? The most authentic classes use many types of texts that occur naturally in the lives of people outside of the classroom. For example, some teachers use actual newspapers, magazines, work manuals, job applications, and coupons for literacy instruction. Furthermore, these texts are often, if not always, used for the actual purposes they are used in real life.   Newspapers are read to find out about the news, the weather, or current issues of importance and interest to the students. Driver's manuals are read to prepare for an actual driver's test. Job applications are read and filled in as part of real-life job searches. Stories or reports are written and actually published in newspapers or journals connected with the literacy program. Novels are read and discussed in response groups similar to adult book clubs that exist outside of schools.

The next most authentic classrooms used more real-life texts than published textbooks and workbooks but did not use real-life texts exclusively. While the majority of the activities in these classrooms centered around authentic texts, the texts were not always used for authentic purposes. Rather, the activities sometimes mimicked real-life uses of these texts. For example, students wrote letters to an editor of a newspaper in the form found in real newspapers, but the letters were not actually sent.

The results of this study suggest that teachers of adult literacy may want to begin to increase the degree to which they include real-life literacy activities and texts in their classes. These results do not indicate that this is an all-or-nothing change. They indicate that the degree to which authentic literacy activities and texts are included in the instruction is important to think about when teaching for actual use of reading and writing skills outside of the classroom. The LPALS team is currently preparing a teacher handbook designed to help adult literacy teachers apply the results of this study to their own practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Victoria Purcell-Gates is Professor of literacy at Michigan State University. She is the author of *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy* (1995; Harvard University Press) and (with co-author, Robin Waterman) *Now We Read, We See, We Speak: Portrait of Literacy Development in an Adult Freirean-Based Class* (2000, Lawrence Erlbaum Press).

Marta Soler is an doctoral candidate in language and literacy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her primary focus is the field of adult literacy, where she has worked as both researcher and practitioner. She is currently a member of the Center for Social and Educational Research at the University of Barcelona, Spain.

STEPS FOR FACILITATING SESSION TWO

Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to…

- Name specific techniques to teach the components of reading instruction to beginning-level adult readers, and evaluate reading instruction through the framework of Equipped for the Future.

- Analyze who adults are as readers within a skills-based and a socio-cultural context.

- Summarize and judge what the research says about the effect of contextualized instruction on literacy practices in adults' everyday lives.

Time: 3½ hours

Preparation:

⬜ **NEWSPRINTS** (Prepare ahead of time: <u>Underlined</u> in the steps)

     ___ Session Two Objectives

     ___ Session Two Agenda

     ___ Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers

     ___ Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-Level Readers

     ___ Information about Adult Readers

     ___ Research on Contextualized Instruction

📄 **HANDOUTS** (Photocopy ahead of time: *Italicized* in the steps)

     ___ Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

📖 **READINGS ASSIGNED FOR SESSION THREE** (Photocopy ahead of time: **Bolded** in the steps)

___ Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief

___ The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief

___ Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (Introduction to the ARCS Web site)

___ Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials

___ Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension

MATERIALS

___ several (3-4) sample copies of *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom*, available for downloading free from: www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf

___ blank newsprint sheets

___ newsprint easel

___ markers, pens, tape

Steps:

Another Idea

Ask participants to reintroduce themselves and share one revelation, reaction, or question they have about teaching reading to adults.

1.   **WELCOME, SESSION TWO OBJECTIVES, AND AGENDA**   (10 MINUTES)

- **Welcome participants** back to the study circle. If the group is more than a few people and a significant amount of time has passed since the last meeting, you may want to ask participants to re-introduce themselves.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session Two Objectives</u>. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

Session Two Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Name specific techniques to teach the components of reading instruction to beginning-level adult readers, and evaluate reading instruction through the framework of Equipped for the Future

- Analyze who adults are as readers within a skills-based and a socio-cultural context

- Summarize and judge what the research says about the effect of contextualized instruction on literacy practices in adults' everyday lives

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- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session Two Agenda</u>. Describe each activity briefly. Ask participants if they have any questions about the agenda.

Session Two Agenda

- Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Overview of Agenda (Doing)

- Using the Components of Reading Instruction to Teach Beginning- and Intermediate-Level Readers

- Understanding Adults as Readers

- Looking at Literacy Practices and Contextualized Instruction

- Evaluation of Session Two and Assignment for Session Three

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2. USING THE COMPONENTS OF READING INSTRUCTION TO TEACH BEGINNING- AND INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL READERS   (60 MINUTES)

-   **Discussing the readings:** Explain that this next activity is based on two of the readings assigned for today's study circle session: **Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults** and **EFF Hot Topics: Read with Understanding.**

- **Explain that participants will work in two groups,** one group for those interested in talking about instruction for beginning-level readers and the other group for those interested in instruction for adults at higher reading levels. Each group will consider both readings. Have participants divide into these two groups.

- **Post the newsprints** <u>Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers</u> **and** <u>Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-level Readers</u>. Then ask small groups to spend 40 minutes discussing their responses to the questions for each reading (20 minutes per reading, starting with the article that corresponds to their group's focus: beginning-level or intermediate- to higher level):

Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers

- What techniques does the author suggest for teaching reading?

- How do you see the components of reading instruction in these techniques?

- What appeals to you about these techniques? What concerns you?

- In what ways might you adapt these techniques to fit your own teaching situation?

Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-Level Readers

- How might the EFF framework help you teach reading?

- How do you see the four components of reading integrated in the sample lesson by Cheryl Williams and Patricia Murchison's reading lesson?

- What ideas might this give you about how to approach reading instruction in your own classroom?

Ask for a volunteer from each group to take notes on the discussion in response to the questions.

- After 40 minutes, **ask each group to share their responses** to the questions with the other group.

- Then **as a whole group discuss the following questions:**

    ? *How are these two approaches (Hager's for low-level readers, EFF for intermediate-level readers) similar and how do they differ?*

    ? *How might either approach be adapted for the other reading level?*

BREAK (15 minutes)

3. UNDERSTANDING ADULTS AS READERS (60 MINUTES)

- 📖 **Discussing the readings:** Explain to participants that this activity will help them get a better understanding of adults as readers, as participants consider the reading process from different research perspectives. Reiterate that, up to this point, the study circle readings have been about reading research that focuses primarily on reading skills. Most of the research on reading is of this type. Yet there is also reading research, most of which is based on interviews and observations, that looks at reading instruction from a different angle (e.g., sociocultural perspectives). Rather than focusing on the components of reading instruction, research that views reading from a sociocultural perspective seeks to discover what people do in terms of reading in their daily lives.

- Participants will begin by comparing the profiles of two adult readers: Richard from **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy** and Ann from **Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices.**

- **Explain that the participants will work in two groups** and have 15 minutes to review and talk about these two profiles. Suggest that they count off by twos to create the

groups. When the groups have been formed, have them begin by silently reviewing or quickly reading for the first time the two profiles.

- After three or four minutes, **ask the groups to spend the next 15 minutes comparing and contrasting the two profiles** and considering their response to the following question:

  ? *What can you learn about these two adults as readers from these two different ways of viewing the reading process?*

- **After 15 minutes, bring the whole group together.** Ask people to list the kinds of information they gained about the adult reader by looking at reading from a skills-based model of reading and from a sociocultural model of reading. Record their responses on newsprint.

> **Information about Adult Readers**
>
> Richard – Skills-based   Ann – Sociocultural

- **Facilitate a discussion** of the whole group by asking participants to consider such questions as:

  ? *What is your reaction to these different ways of understanding adults as readers?*

  ? *What might an understanding of readers mean for the way you teach reading?*

4. **LOOKING AT LITERACY PRACTICES AND CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION** (50 MINUTES)

- 📖 **Discussing the reading:** Explain to participants that this activity focuses on increasing adult students' reading skills as an outcome of literacy instruction. However, there is another outcome of instruction—increases and improvements in how much and how often adults read in their daily lives. The next research study focuses on the type of instruction that affects adult students' reading practices. Refer participants to the article **Taking Literacy Skills Home,** which they read before this session.

- As a pre-reading activity, **post the newsprint** <u>Research on Contextualized Instruction</u> **and ask participants to read the questions before they read the handouts you are about to give them.** (Remind them that this is standard practice to help students improve their comprehension.)

> **Research on Contextualized Instruction**
>
> - Is increasing the literacy practices of adult students a goal of yours, your students, or your program?
>
> - If so, what might this research mean for the instruction you provide?
>
> - What are the advantages and disadvantages of contextualized instruction and using authentic materials?

- 📄 **Distribute the handout** *Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction.* Ask participants to spend five minutes to silently and individually read through the handouts.

- **Facilitate a 20-minute discussion of this research with the whole group,** using the questions on the newsprint as a guide.

- **Pass around several samples of** *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom,* and ask participants in pairs to leaf through the guide, using the Road Map on the handout to help them understand what's in the guide. Make sure that participants know where they can download or get a copy of the guide, if they want one. Ask participants if they have any comments about the guide.

5. EVALUATION OF SESSION TWO AND ASSIGNMENT
FOR SESSION THREE (15 MINUTES)

Another Idea

Use the "Useful/How to Improve" technique from Day One to get quick feedback from the participants about what was useful and what could be improved about this session.

Either take notes yourself on a piece of paper or write their comments on newsprint for documentation.

- **Using the newsprint** <u>Session Two Agenda</u>**, ask participants for a thumbs up, down, or level to show their reaction to the activities.** Quickly total the responses on the newsprint: +, -, or N (neutral).

  Ask for suggestions for improvements.

- **Explain to participants what the final series of research articles covers:** research about how to understand the reading profiles of adult students, as well as how to help adult students acquire an understanding of what the reading process and components are, plus some examples of specific instructional strategies for improving fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension.

- 🕮 **Distribute Readings Assigned for Session Three:**

  - 🕮 **Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Tell participants that they should read the entire article.

  - 🕮 **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Tell participants that they should read the entire article.

-     📖   **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site).** Explain that they should read the entire article, and ask participants, if they have a chance, to go to the Web site (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/) and check it out.

-     📖   **Introduction to *Understanding What Reading is All About* Teaching Materials.** Explain that they should read the introduction and skim the outline.

-     📖   **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension.** Explain that they should skim through all pages, then read those sections that relate to the instructional strategies they might be interested in using in their classes.

- 📄   **Refer participants to the *Participants' To-Do Form* in the Pre-Meeting Packet.** To the best of your ability, make sure that participants are clear about what they are required to do before the next meeting.

- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.** If applicable, explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next meeting in the event of bad weather. Be sure that you have everyone's home and/or work telephone numbers so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Two

1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda	10 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post newsprints; review.

2. Using the Components of Reading Instruction to Teach Beginning- and Intermediate-Level Readers	60 mins., SMALL GROUP then WHOLE GROUP

- Form two groups according to level; post newsprint for groups to discuss (40 minutes in groups).
- Regroup; representative from each small group shares responses.
- Whole group discussion:
    - **?** *How are these two approaches* (Hager's for low-level readers, EFF for intermediate readers) *similar and how do they differ?*
    - **?** *How might either approach be adapted for another reading level?*

15-Minute Break

3. Understanding Adults as Readers	60 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP

- Discuss readings **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties...** and **Literacy for Life....** Form two random groups.
- In groups, review readings; then 15 minutes in groups to discuss:
    - **?** *What can you learn about these two adults as readers from these two different ways of reviewing the reading process?*
- Regroup; post newsprint <u>Information about Adult Readers</u>; list information about each reader.
- Whole group discussion:
    - **?** *What is your reaction to these different ways of understanding adults as readers?*
    - **?** *What might an understanding of readers mean for the way you teach reading?*

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Two

4. Looking at Literacy Practices and Contextualized Instruction	50 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Refer to reading **Taking Literacy Skills Home**; post newsprint <u>Research on Contextualized Instruction</u>.

- Distribute handout *Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction*; silent reading.

- Whole group discussion, using newsprint questions.

- Pass around sample of *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom.*

5. Evaluation of Session Two and Assignment for Session Three	15 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post newsprint Session Two Agenda; ask for thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs level about each activity; ask for ideas for improvement.

- Hand out readings assigned for Session Three.

- Remind participants of the session's date, time, and location.

Materials to Hand Out in Session Two

CONTENTS

Handouts for Session Two

Handout 🗋: *Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction*

Readings Assigned for Session Three

Reading 📖: **Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief**

Reading 📖: **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief**

Reading 📖: **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site)**

Reading 📖: **Introduction to *Understanding What Reading is All About* Teaching Materials**

Reading 📖: **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension**

Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

RESEARCH ON CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

What is "Contextualized Instruction"?

Contextualized instruction involves using authentic, real-life texts and materials for real-life purposes within classroom instruction (rather than "school-only" texts and materials such as workbooks or practice tests). Authentic texts and materials match the literacy practices of the particular students within that class (not just students in general). They are not just functional and not just real; rather, they parallel the actual literacy practices of those students in the world outside of formal schooling

1. **First Study: *Literacy Practices of Adult Learners (LPAL) Study*** [*]

Findings of the LPAL Study.

- Students who participate in classes in which real-life literacy activities and texts are used increase:

  ⇒ the frequency with which they read and write in their daily lives

  ⇒ the variety of texts they read and write outside of school

- How much students and teachers share decision-making for all aspects of their program was not related to literacy practice change.

Research Question. What are the relationships among the degree to which adult literacy classes use real-life literacy activities and materials (contextualized instruction), the degree to which students and teachers share decision making, and changes in students' out-of-school literacy practices?

Study Methodology. Collected data on out-of-school literacy practices from 173 adult students, at a range of levels, attending 83 different classes (ABE, GED, family literacy and ESOL) across the U.S.

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[*] Conducted through the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) by Victoria Purcell–Gates, Sophie Degener, Erik Jacobson, and Marta Soler at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Reports and articles available online at www.ncsall.net.

Data Collected.

- Observed classes and surveyed teachers and programs about the role of students in decision making in the classes, and about how frequently real-life activities and texts were used in classes

- Visited and interviewed learners in their homes at beginning and at end of participation in literacy class

- Used structured questionnaire to ask learners about 50 different literacy practices, such as reading newspapers, reading mail, writing letters, and reading to children

Implications of the LPAL Study. If teachers want students to increase and expand real-life literacy practices (not just do better on tests or workbooks), they should use contextualized instruction (real-life literacy activities and texts) in their classes. This could also have an impact on children's schooling since:

- Children learn more about the "conceptual basis of reading and writing" when they grow up in homes where adults read and write more

- Children who begin school with higher levels of literacy knowledge and familiarity are more successful at learning to read and write

2. **Second Study:** *National "What Works" Evaluation for Adult ESL Students*[*]

Findings of the "What Works" ESL Study. Growth in basic reading skills (Woodcock-Johnson Basic Reading Skills Cluster) was stronger when teachers made connections to the "outside" or real world and used authentic materials.

Research Question. What are effective instructional approaches and methods for teaching adult ESL learners with limited literacy skills?

Study Methodology. This study was a comparative study of adult ESL learners and teaching practices in 38 classes from 13 programs in seven states (Arizona, California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Texas and Washington).

Session Two Handouts

Data Collected.

- Collected data from 495 ESL students upon entry to the program, then three and nine months after enrollment. Measured students' English language and literacy development using standardized and non-standardized tests.

- Also collected extensive data on teaching through multiple classroom observations. Looked at instructional strategies such as "varied practice and interaction", "open communication", and "connection to the 'outside'".

Implications of the "What Works" ESL Study. Use of contextualized instruction is one, effective approach for improving the reading skills of adult ESL students with limited literacy skills.

Distinction Between Functional Skills, Real Materials, and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Life skills that are needed by adults in general, and assumed to be needed by most ABE and ESOL students

Examples:
- Textbooks with exercises that show how to fill out checks
- Worksheets with dialogues for talking to child's teacher

TEACHING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IS NOT AUTHENTIC AND CONTEXTUALIZED IF:
- Teachers or curriculum automatically assume students need these skills, but in fact they are not the actual literacy or language skills needed by the particular students in your class
- Teachers do not use the real-text examples students bring in from their daily lives

REAL MATERIALS

Real literacy texts or objects that adults encounter in their daily lives

Examples:
- Checkbooks
- Letters from teachers at children's school

TEACHING USING REAL MATERIALS IS NOT AUTHENTIC OR CONTEXTUALIZED IF:
- Teachers or curriculum automatically assume that these are the materials that students need or want to learn to master, or they are not the actual literacy or language texts encountered by the particular students in the class

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS, CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Print materials used in ways that they would be used in the lives of learners outside their adult education classes*. Materials and instruction aimed directly at the skills and knowledge adults need to perform tasks they have identified as meaningful to them "right now" in their everyday lives**

Examples:
- Practice filling out the actual school registration form brought in by an adult student after she identified it as a need
- Practice writing checks after student expresses desire to open checking account

Functional context and real materials are *only* authentic and contextualized *if* students in your class have identified specific content and skills as a goal or need and identified those materials as the real-life texts or objects they want to master.

* From Jacobson, et al (2003) *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners.* Available at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf

** From Gillespie (2002). *EFF research principle: A contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction.* Available at http://eff.cls.utk.edu/PDF/03research-practice.pdf

An Example of the Difference Between Functional Skills, Real Materials, and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

An adult education teacher, Robert, who teaches beginning- and intermediate-level English to Speakers of Other Languages learners in an urban program, uses a standard life skills curriculum. The curriculum is presented in a textbook that includes chapters with lesson plans for learning oral language, reading and writing skills in functional content areas for adult newcomers to the U.S., including health skills (making appointments with doctors and dentists, calling the emergency number, reading labels on bottles), shopping (reading labels, asking questions in grocery stores), banking (opening checking and savings accounts), getting around (reading bus schedules), housing (reading rental agreements, negotiating repairs with landlords), etc. The curriculum includes worksheets for students to fill out to practice their reading and writing skills in these areas, including samples of real tasks, such as a page with multiple fake checks on it to fill out. Once, Robert even brought in the form his doctor asked him to fill out in the waiting room. **Robert is teaching functional skills, using some real materials.**

Each semester, Robert divides the curriculum into segments, covering one chapter per week of class. He tells the students, most of whom are recent Chinese immigrants, what will be covered each week. However, he finds that it sometimes takes more than one week to cover a chapter, so that some chapters are left undone at the end of the semester. One semester, at the beginning of his intermediate-level class, Robert decides to ask the students to prioritize the content areas according to what they feel they most need to learn, so that if they run out of time at the end of the semester, the students will be missing out on the topics that they prioritized as lowest.

He gives the students a list of the functional content areas covered in the curriculum, and asks them to discuss the areas with each other and reorder the content areas, highest priority first. At the end of the activity, Robert looks at their newly-ordered list, sees that there has been some shuffling of priorities, but is very surprised to see that "visiting the dentist" has been entirely left off the list of functional content areas. He asks the students why this is so. One student explains, in halting English, that all of the students in the class go to Chinese dentists; the dentists keep records in Chinese, and the students are happy with these dentists and have no desire to go to an English-speaking dentist, so they see no need to learn that vocabulary in English. Robert realizes that he has been

teaching the vocabulary and reading skills related to "visiting the dentist" for the past two years to Chinese students, without realizing that probably none of the students was interested in learning it.

So he decides to ask the students what topics they would like to add to the list of functional content areas. Immediately the students begin talking about attending parent-teacher conferences and all of the information that comes home from their children's schools in English: field trip forms, descriptions of the statewide tests, announcements of meetings and presentations, results from standardized tests, etc. Since Robert does not have children, and the curriculum does not cover many of these skills, Robert asks them to bring in materials sent home by the school, and he offers to design a unit on the English needed for dealing with children's schools and teachers. The students not only begin to bring in examples of school-generated texts, but they ask Robert to move the "dealing with school" unit close to the front of the semester, since it is a high priority for most of the students. Robert uses the texts students bring from home for reading and writing practice, and designs parent-teacher conference dialogues for the students to practice, using vocabulary from the materials sent home by the school. **For this unit, Robert is using authentic materials and providing contextualized instruction.**

ROAD MAP for Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners[*]

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT:

> the Literacy Practices of Adult Learners research…
>
> ⟶ Go to the <u>Introduction</u> (pp. v – x)

> the definition of authentic materials and activities…
>
> ⟶ Go to <u>Chapter One</u> (pp. 1 – 5)

> the theories behind authentic materials…
>
> ⟶ Go to <u>Chapter One</u> (pp. 5 – 20)

> how to learn about students' lives in order to know what materials and activities would be authentic…
>
> ⟶ Go to <u>Chapter Two</u> (pp. 27 – 41)

> how to use authentic materials and activities in your class…
>
> ⟶ Go to <u>Chapter Three</u> (pp. 43 – 66) or <u>Chapter Four</u> (pp. 67 – 88)

> how to assess student goals and progress…
>
> ⟶ Go to <u>Chapter Five</u> (pp. 89 – 104)

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[*] Available at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf

Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief

Strucker, J. & Davidson, R. (2003, November). *Adult reading components study (ARCS)* (NCSALL Research Brief). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL.

NCSALL's Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS), conducted by John Strucker and Rosalind Davidson at Harvard Graduate School of Education, was designed to describe the various types or clusters of readers enrolled in US adult basic education (ABE) programs, including both native speakers and those in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. The goal of the study was to help practitioners and policymakers understand who adult learners are as readers and how to gear instruction to their specific reading needs.

Nine hundred and fifty-five randomly-selected learners (676 ABE and 279 ESOL) were interviewed and assessed at learning centers in Texas, Tennessee, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. They were given a battery of reading and language assessments to determine their instructional needs. Over half of this testing was done by local ABE and ESOL practitioners who were trained to administer the battery and conduct the interviews in a uniform manner. Each of the students in the study was tested in phonological awareness, rapid naming, word recognition, oral reading, spelling, vocabulary, and background knowledge. Researchers also interviewed students about their educational history and reading habits.

In this research brief, we present some preliminary findings from the ARCS. These findings and implications for practice related to the findings, are presented in two sections: 1. Native English Speakers' (ABE) Clusters, and 2. Native Spanish Speakers' (ESOL) Clusters. Then we refer readers to additional resources based on the ARCS.

NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' (ABE) CLUSTERS

For the 676 students in ABE classes, 51 percent had repeated at least one grade, and 22 percent reported having trouble with reading in grades K-3. Of those who grew up in the U.S., 53 percent reported getting either Chapter 1 (reading support) and/or Special Education help in K-12.

The mean word recognition score for these students was a 6.62 grade equivalent (GE). Their mean oral reading mastery level was GE

7.9, and their mean receptive vocabulary score was equivalent to a GE 6.5. On a test of background knowledge, the mean for the group was below average range for the test, and the mean score on a word analysis test (Woodcock-Reading Mastery Word Attack) placed this group of students in the 26th percentile.

From the 676 adult basic education students assessed in this study, the researchers identified 10 "clusters" (students with similar reading profiles) in three groups. The table below details the three common groups and the clusters within each group for the 676 ABE students in this study.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF ABE STUDENTS IN THE TEN CLUSTERS IN THREE COMMON GROUPS OF READING SKILL LEVELS

Groups and Clusters of Reading Skill Levels	Percentage of Students in ABE Sample
Group 1: GED / Pre-GED	*34%*
Cluster 1: Strong GED	9%
Cluster 2: Pre-GED with Vocabulary/Background Information needs	11%
Cluster 3: Pre-GED with Vocabulary/Spelling/Rate (fluency) needs	14%
Group 2: Intermediate Students	*56%*
Cluster 4: High Intermediates with Difficulties in Print Skills/Rate	9%
Cluster 5: Intermediates with Stronger Print than Meaning Skills	17%
Cluster 6: Intermediates with Low Reading Rate	5%
Cluster 7: Low Intermediates	16%
Cluster 8: Low Intermediates/Should-be-in-ESOL	9%
Group 3: Lower Level/Beginning Students	*11%*
Cluster 9: Beginners	8%
Cluster 10: Reading/Rate Impaired	3%

In general, many adult basic education students below the GED level have reading skills similar to those of children at risk for reading difficulty. Phonemic awareness problems that existed in childhood persisted into adulthood. Their reading comprehension and reading rate (fluency) seem to have stalled at middle school levels. Perhaps this is because, although they got extra help with reading in the primary grades

from Chapter 1 or special education teachers, they got no such help in middle or high school. Because their reading was stalled at middle school levels, their background knowledge and vocabulary also top off at that level.

Some of the specific findings about this group, and the implications for practice related to each finding, are listed below:

GED-level and low-level/beginning readers have different reading profiles from intermediate readers.

Implication: GED group needs help in passing the test and building skills (in preparation for post-secondary education). Low level/beginning students, because of poor phonemic awareness and word recognition skills, need direct, systematic, sequential instruction in these skills.

In the intermediate group, who comprise the largest percentage of adult students, students appear to have learned some word attack skills; they know basic phonics, but don't make strong use of those skills.

Implication: The primary needs for intermediates are increasing fluency and developing a more literate (above grade equivalent 4-5) vocabulary and background knowledge. Without middle school background knowledge in history, geography, science, and math, these students have an inadequate preparation for the GED or for post-secondary education. For the intermediate group of adult students, practitioners should focus on increasing students' reading fluency (using oral reading) and on acquiring background knowledge and vocabulary.

The researchers also advocate for further research aimed at identifying strategies for teaching vocabulary so that students can achieve accelerated growth in reading.

NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS' (ESOL) CLUSTERS (ANALYZING SPANISH SPEAKERS ENGLISH READING SKILLS)

Of the 279 ESOL students tested in the ARCS, 78% were native speakers of Spanish. They were interviewed in Spanish and given both English and Spanish reading components tests. The interview included questions on the learner's childhood educational history; Spanish reading problems, if any; parents' levels of education/years living in the US; time spent studying English; home and work literacy practices and spoken language use in Spanish and English; educational goals; and health.

The researchers used the data from four English tests and five Spanish tests to create clusters of similar learners. While the size of the

sample used in this analysis means that these findings shouldn't be generalized across all Spanish speakers, they can be suggestive. Key findings from this analysis and related implications include:

Contrary to what many ESOL teachers told the ARCS researchers to expect, more than 80% of the native Spanish speakers had adequate or better native language literacy skills.

Implication: For many of these students who have adequate-to-strong native language literacy skills, an "English-as-a-Foreign-Language" (EFL) approach might produce faster growth than traditional survival/conversational ESL approaches. These students should be given the opportunity to apply their literacy and school-based skills to the task of learning English. This might mean more formal EFL courses that teach grammar and vocabulary sequentially, using basic EFL texts as well as materials taken from a real-world context. For these already literate adults, reading and writing English may actually facilitate the acquisition of oral-aural skills in English.

Unlike the ABE students discussed previously, ESOL Spanish speakers' reading ability in Spanish was directly related to years of Spanish school completion: the more years completed, the stronger the skills. It is also possible that the years of school completion in Spanish is related to the speed of English skills acquisition.

Implication: Most of these students were did not have reading disabilities as children. As discussed above, students with strong skills in Spanish might benefit from a more formal EFL approach, as if they were normally developing high school students taking English as a foreign language.

All participants, regardless of level, were surprisingly weak on English consonant sounds.

Implication: Literacy programs often quickly gloss over English phonemes (letter sounds) in beginning ESOL classes because the learners who are already literate in Spanish seem able to chunk English words correctly into syllables immediately. This is because they transfer this chunking skill from Spanish. But it is important for all ESOL students to practice producing and perceiving English consonant sounds. English has a lot of medial and final consonant blends (-nt, -st,) that are difficult to perceive in the natural speech stream, but they are nevertheless important because they often carry vital syntactic and semantic information. In addition, because English vowels can be pronounced several different ways, formal attention to basic English phonics patterns

and rules is a valuable investment for their future pronunciation and spelling, even if learners seem to already know how to decode English.

The two clusters of Spanish speakers who have low levels of education in Spanish also have severe decoding problems and show other signs of reading disabilities. Despite an average of almost ten years in the US and almost three years of ESOL instruction, unlike students in the other clusters, their English skills remain at early beginning levels.

<u>Implication</u>: Initial instruction in English for these students might emphasize oral-aural conversational skills at first, then introduce English reading and writing later using a direct, structured, and sequential approach such as Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood, etc.

The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)*: NCSALL Research Brief

Strucker, J., Yamamoto, K., & Kirsch, I. (2005, May). *The relationship of the component skills of reading to performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)* (NCSALL Research Brief). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL.

This Research Brief highlights key findings from a study that is a subset of a larger study being conducted jointly by NCSALL's John Strucker and Kentaro Yamamoto and Irwin Kirsch of the Educational Testing Service (ETS). This study builds on the proposition that a reader's comprehension performance is largely determined by his or her abilities in two areas—print components and meaning components—and that learners' skills, and therefore instructional needs, vary depending upon their relative strengths and weaknesses in these component areas. Print components include decoding accuracy and fluency; meaning components include oral vocabulary skills.

The study also continues work done by Strucker and NCSALL's Rosalind Davidson to develop reading profiles of IALS Levels 1 and 2 adults that will be informative for teachers, administrators, and policymakers in the field of adult literacy.

GOALS

The study's first goal was to see if specific levels of proficiency—tipping points—in the aforementioned reading components might prefigure higher levels of reading comprehension. To explore this question, the researchers compared the reading component skills of students at Levels 1 and 2 of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) with those of Level 3 students. Level 3 is the IALS level associated with increased civic

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* The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Tuijnman, A., 2000) has been administered in over 22 countries and in more than 15 languages. It is a test of real-world literacy skills, based closely on the U.S. National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) (Kirsch, I. et al. 1993). Like the NALS, the IALS has five levels: Roughly speaking, Level 1 ranges from people with very limited literacy up to those with approximately early middle school skills; Level 2 includes those with middle school to early high school skills, and Level 3 begins with those who have literacy skills comparable to solid high school graduates. Across all of the participating countries, IALS Level 3 attainment was associated with dramatic increases in civic participation, economic success, access to lifelong learning opportunities, and reading for pleasure. In addition, people in Level 3 and above also enjoy better overall health and even live longer.

participation, increased economic success and independence, and enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and personal literacy.

The second goal was to determine whether levels of proficiency in the key components of reading could be used to describe the strengths and needs in reading of Level 1 and Level 2 adults, and therefore be useful to teachers, administrators, and policymakers to guide assessment design and instructional decisions.

THE SAMPLE

The study sample was a convenience sample rather than a representative sample. It included 950 adult learners from five states who were enrolled in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Eighty-four adults who had completed high school or above were added as a household sample for comparison purposes, for a total of 1,034 participants. Beginning ESOL learners were not included in the study because we did not have the capability to interview them in their native languages. Otherwise, the sample was generally comparable to the nationally enrolled adult literacy population with respect to gender, age, and representation of major U.S. ethnic groups.

	U.S. DOE OVAE* Data	Level 1 Sample n = 1,034
Male/Female	46.8% / 53.2%	41% / 59%
Age Distribution		
16–24	40%	36.4%
25–44	44.5%	48.1%
45–59	11%	10.1%
60 and older	3.5%	5.3%
Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.4%	5.4%
Asian	7%	3.9%
Black or African–American	20%	29.5%
White	30%	51.8%
Hispanic	40%	38.3%**

* U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.
** Following U.S. Census Bureau procedures, Black, White, and Hispanic categories were not mutually exclusive for the Level 1 Sample, so the total exceeds 100%.

All participants were assessed in: 1) receptive (oral) vocabulary, 2) real-word reading for accuracy and speed, 3) pseudo-word reading for accuracy and speed, 4) spelling, 5) rapid naming of letters, and 6) short-

term working memory. They also completed prose and document literacy tasks from the IALS and a modified version of the IALS background questionnaire covering educational history, employment, reading habits, etc.

Receptive vocabulary	Shortened version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test created by K. Yamamoto (PPVT–Y)[1]
Real–word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE–A)[2]
Pseudo–word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE–B)[2]
Spelling	Adaptation of diagnostic spelling assessment published by Louisa Moats[3]
Short–term working memory	Forward and backward Digit Span subtests from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale IIIR[4]
Rapid naming of letters	Rapid Automatized Naming of Letters (RAN) and scrambled alphabet letters[5]

THE FINDINGS – PART 1

Proportions Correct by IALS Prose Proficiency

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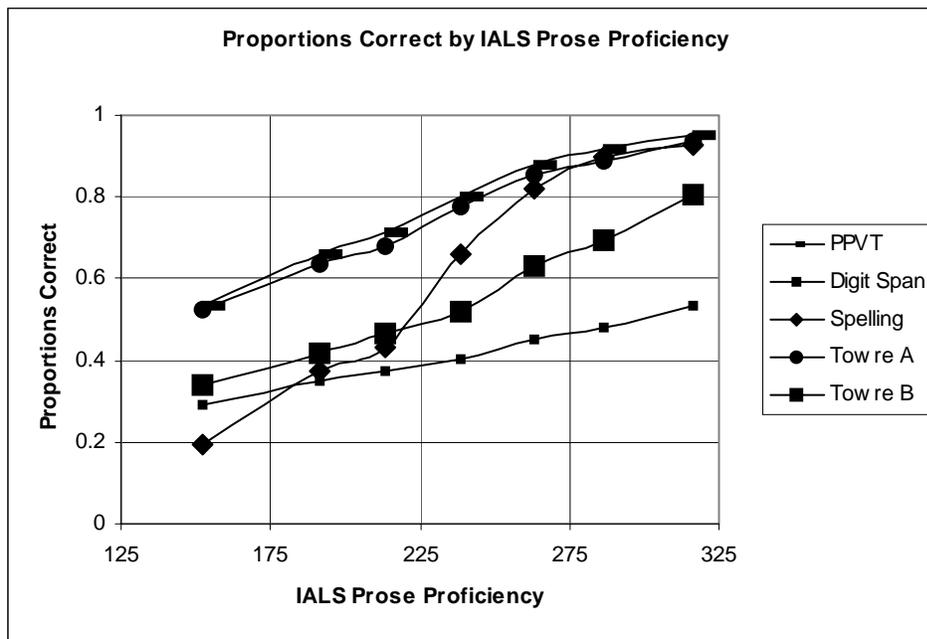
[1] Dunn, L. & Dunn, L. (1997). *Peabody picture vocabulary test III (PPVT–III).* Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

[2] Torgensen, J.K., Wagner, R.K., & Rashotte, C.A. (1999). *Test of word reading efficiency (TOWRE).* Austin, TX: PRO–ED, Inc.

[3] Moats, L.C. (1995). *Spelling development, disability, and instruction.* Timonium, MD: York Press.

[4] Wechsler, D. (1997). *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS–III) Digit Span.* San Antonio: TX: The Psychological Corporation.

[5] Wolf, M. (1991). Reading speed and naming: The contribution of the cognitive neurosciences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24.

Plotting the relationship of scores in the five key components (y-axis) against proficiency on the IALS prose literacy assessment (x-axis) revealed an interesting pattern. At the transition point between IALS Level 2 and IALS Level 3 (just below 275), readers score .75 to .85 proportion correct on the components of vocabulary, real-word reading, and spelling. This suggests that .75 to .85 proportion proficiency in those components may be the minimum level of skills needed to attain higher levels of performance in real world comprehension. In short, this research begins to answer an important question: "How proficient do ABE/ASE/ESOL readers have to be at vocabulary and word recognition in order to read at high school levels and above?"

The data also showed that up to IALS 275 (Level 3), the non-native speakers of English read English pseudo-words *better* than the ABE and ASE learners. Many reading researchers consider difficulty with reading pseudo-words to be an indication of the core phonological deficit that is at the root of most reading disabilities. Participants' responses on the background questionnaire confirmed this: ABE/ASE native English speakers reported a very high incidence of childhood reading difficulties, while non-native speakers of English reported a very low incidence of childhood reading problems.

THE FINDINGS – PART 2

We performed latent class analysis of the test data to explore whether proficiencies in vocabulary (PPVT-Y), word recognition (TOWRE A), pseudo-word reading (TOWRE-B), Spelling, and short-term memory (WAIS digit span) could be used to describe patterns of reading strengths and needs among adult literacy students. That analysis yielded five patterns or classes of adult readers whose characteristics are summarized in the table below.

Class	% of Total Sample (n=1034)	% Native English Speakers	% Non–Native English Speakers	IALS Prose Literacy Levels %		
				Level 1	Level 2	Level 3+
1	48 (n=493)	86	14	5 (n=24)	49 (n=242)	46 (n=227)
2	17 (n=175)	72	28	26 (n=45)	61(n=107)	13 (n=23)
3	15 (n=154)	5	95	32 (n=50)	62 (n=95)	6 (n=9)
4	12 (n=123)	<1	99	68 (n=83)	29 (n=36)	3 (4)
5	9 (n=89)	31	69	83 (n=74)	16 (n=14)	1(n=1)

* Class 1, making up 48% of the sample, had the highest range of IALS skills, with 46% in Level 3 or above, 49% in Level 2, and only 5% in Level 1. Native speakers of English predominated, making up 86% of the class. This group was also the youngest overall.

* Class 2 had weaker IALS skills with only 13% scoring at IALS Level 3 or above, 61% in Level 2, and 26% in Level 1. The non-native English speakers in the group had good English skills and were predominantly enrolled in ABE or ASE rather than in ESOL classes. The native English speakers in Class 2 had weak print skills and some signs of reading disability.

* Class 3 is comprised of 95% non-native speakers of English, of whom 75% are enrolled in ESOL classes. Their raw decoding ability (of pseudo-words) is nearly equal to that of participants in Class 1, but their vocabulary is much weaker. Sixty-two percent are in IALS Level 2, and 32% are Level 1.

* Class 4 are 99% non-native speakers of English, of whom 92% were enrolled in ESOL classes. Primarily because of their weak English vocabulary, 68% of Class 4 are in IALS Level 1 and only 29% are in Level 2.

* Class 5 is made up of 69% non-native and 31% native speakers of English. Among the latter group, many show signs of reading disability and report severe reading difficulties in childhood. Eighty-three percent of the people in Class 5 are in IALS Level 1 and only 16%% are in Level 2.

IMPLICATIONS

Patterns of strengths and needs in reading vary quite a bit among adult readers. Quick, easy-to-administer and easy-to-score tests of key reading skills, such as those used in this study, can give a useful picture of learners' strengths and needs. Assessing learners in these component skills is the necessary first step in planning efficient, focused instruction.

For adults in IALS Levels 1 and 2, governments should consider assessing not just IALS reading comprehension, but the key teachable components of comprehension—word recognition and vocabulary that ultimately drive comprehension ability.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND
RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Finding

It is possible to identify how proficient adults need to be in word recognition and vocabulary to achieve Level 3 performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)—the level associated with greatly enhanced life opportunities in many domains.

Related Recommendation

Learners whose vocabulary and word recognition are nearing those of people in Level 3 and above might be candidates for intensive, tightly focused, direct instruction in the vocabulary encountered in written language and in rapid, accurate word recognition.

Key Finding

The IALS is an un-timed literacy assessment containing real-world items embedded in a functional context. This has led some to argue that IALS performance is primarily a function of adults' life experiences and their familiarity with the socio-cultural content of the items. In sharp contrast, this research suggests that well-known basic reading skills like word recognition and vocabulary play critical roles in real-life literacy performances, much as they do in more traditional academic, school-based literacy assessments. The good news about these basic skills is that, unlike life experience and cultural context, word recognition and vocabulary are readily teachable by ABE practitioners.

Key Finding

Adult literacy students can be grouped into five distinct classes of readers:

Class 1: Proficient ABE, ASE, and Household Sample readers with very strong decoding and vocabulary skills

Class 2: ABE and ASE students with weaker decoding skills that tend to undermine their vocabulary skills

Class 3: Advanced ESOL students with strong decoding but noticeably weaker English vocabulary skills

Class 4: Intermediate ESOL students with moderate weaknesses in decoding and vocabulary skills in English.

Class 5: Low intermediate ESOL students and reading disabled ABE native speakers with marked needs in decoding and vocabulary.

Related Recommendation

The adult education system can begin to use these adult reader profiles to identify related instructional profiles as a step towards more focused and differentiated reading instruction for adult learners.

Short, easy-to-administer tests that give information about the learner's component reading skills will help identify the reader's profile and enable teachers to choose appropriate instructional approaches.

Key Finding

Simply knowing a readers' score on a reading comprehension test usually does not give teachers enough information to plan efficient instruction that is focused on the root causes of comprehension difficulties.

Readings Assigned for Session Three

http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles

Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles:

An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners

A Tool to Aid in Diagnosing Reading Difficulties

Whether to get a better job, attend community college or a trade school, or to enrich their lives in other ways, adults come to literacy classes to become better readers. Reading is not a single skill, it is a composite of several sub-skills any one of which can be weak enough to be the cause of a low level of reading comprehension.

Learners usually receive a silent reading comprehension test such as the TABE, ABLE or similar assessment when they first enroll. While such an assessment is necessary for an approximate class placement, it tells a teacher little about the learner's instructional needs; the instructor needs to know the learner's abilities on each of the major sub-skills of mature reading comprehension.

An Interactive Resource

Users enter a learner's grade equivalent reading scores on a few critical skills – word recognition, spelling, word meaning, oral reading rate, and on silent reading comprehension. Input of the learner's scores (reading profile) is then matched to one of the several distinctive reading profile groups we derived from the Adult Reading Component Study (ARCS). Information is given that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of learners with this reading profile.

A Resource for Learning About Reading Components and More...

In addition to the interactive Match a Profile, there is a Mini-Course on assessment and instruction of reading components, downloadable tests and word lists, references, and links to research. A section describes the methods, and findings of the ARCS project, the research on which this website is based.

The Website is for....

All ABE Teachers
Although the site has most relevance for teachers of basic reading, all ABE teachers are involved in the reading education of their learners.

Administrators of Literacy Centers
Administrators will learn more about reading development and the advantage of an extended initial assessment of enrollees in order to group learners who have similar instructional needs.

Adult Education Curriculum Resource Personnel
Knowing more about reading development will help resource personnel evaluate materials and methods for teachers and literacy centers.

http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles

This interactive website has two tracks:

From the homepage,

you can select

either "Match

a Profile" or

"The Mini-Course"

(you can switch

between tracks

at any time.)

▶ Match a Profile

Introduction to Reading Profiles and Reading Components

Not sure what reading profiles and components are? This page explains them.

Introduction to Match a Profile

What test scores will you need to match a research-based profiles? This page tells you.

Match a Profile

Ready to match a profile? This page contains the data form you will use to input your learners' scores. Once you click "Perform Analysis," you will go to the description of the research-based profile you matched.

Browse All Profiles

Interested in viewing any of the other research-based profiles featured on this site? From this page, you can browse through the descriptions of all 11 profiles as well as comparisons of profiles that are in the same Silent Reading Comprehension group.

How Did We Create the Profiles?

Would you like to know how we created the research-based profiles? This page tells you.

The Word Meaning Test (WMT)

Would you like a free word meaning test to use in your program? From this page, you can view and download one we have developed.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND READING PROFILES
Research-based assessment practices for the adult education classroom

WELCOME TO THE INTERACTIVE WEBSITE
FOR ADULT EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

ARCS - The Adult Reading Components Study at NCSALL
This website is based on the ARCS, a study that assessed the reading of 955 adult learners. Researchers tested participants individually on eleven skills (components) that contribute to reading ability. A list of scores for each learner became that individual's reading profile, illustrating his or her strengths and instructional needs.

On this website, 569 Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners from the ARCS are grouped into 11 profiles. Each profile group shows a distinctive pattern and/or level of reading component skills. You will learn more about profiles as you navigate the site via the two tracks described below.

Two Website Tracks:

Match a Profile
On the "Match a Profile" track, you can enter scores for your learner and be matched to one of the 11 ARCS-based profiles. You will find suggestions for instruction as well as information about the ARCS learners in this group that may relate to your learner.

Take the Mini-Course
Although you will find enough information on the "Match A Profile" track to understand your learner's reading profile, the "Mini-Course" offers an opportunity to learn more about reading. You will find extensive information on the major reading components and assessment as well as sections containing references and downloadable resources.

Mini-Course in Reading
▸ Reading Components
  ▸ Print Skills (Alphabetics)
  ▸ Meaning Skills
▸ Assessments Drive Instruction
  ▸ Using a Questionnaire
  ▸ Using Assessments

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NCSALL's involvement in developing the content and materials for the NREI website for teachers of adult reading does not constitute, and should not be construed as, an endorsement by NCSALL or Harvard University of this website or of any other materials or information included in this website.

Readings Assigned for Session Three

http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles

▶ The Mini-Course

Introduction to the Mini-Course

What sections make up the Mini-Course? This page tells you what you will find.

Reading Components

What are reading components? These pages introduce the two groups of components.

Print Skills (Alphabetics): Phonemics, Word Recognition, Sight Words, Word Analysis, Spelling, and Rate & Fluency

Need more information on Print Skills (Alphabetics)? These pages provide extensive information.

Meaning Skills Background Knowledge, Word Meaning (Vocabulary), and Silent Reading Comprehension

Need more information on Meaning Skills? These pages provide extensive information.

Assessment Drives Instruction

How is assessment related to instruction? Why is testing silent reading alone not enough? Would you like to view descriptions of the eleven research-based profiles featured on this site? These pages explore assessment and the profile descriptions.

Using a Questionnaire

Would you like to use a learner questionnaire in your program? This page lets you view and download the questionnaire used in the ARCS.

Using Assessments

Which assessments are used around the country? What kinds of assessments can you use with your learners? This section tells you.

References

Interested in the research? Find citations here.

Resources

Would you like to download word lists, the Word Meaning Test, or an informal Word Analysis Inventory? Interested in finding the web addresses of other adult education sites? This page can help.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONTACT US....

E-mail: ncsall@gse.harvard.edu
Call: (617) 495-4843

http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles

Three Learners from a High Intermediate Class
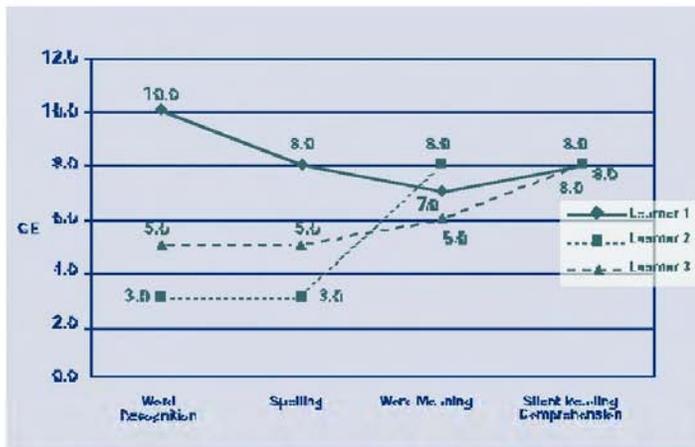
Time taken for diagnostic reading assessments can pay off in focused lessons that give learners the best opportunity to become better readers in the shortest amount of time.

The graph is of ABE learners from the ARCS data set. It shows grade equivalent levels (GE) on four reading components for three learners. If these learners were entering ABE classes, an entrance test would show all three learners reading silently with comprehension at GE 8.

Therefore, all three would be placed in the same high intermediate literacy class. However, the readers have distinctive arrays of abilities that require different focuses of instruction.

Learner 1 is a non-native speaker of English, literate in his first language and progressing well toward his goal of a community college education. He needs more word meanings (vocabulary) and background knowledge in order to raise his silent reading comprehension.

Learner 2, a native English speaker, has a typical dyslexic's profile, and although she has partially compensated for her deficiencies by using her vocabulary to support word recognition in context, she needs a systematic program of word analysis to raise her independent reading level.

Learner 3, also a native English speaker, shows a significant difference between his print skills and his reading comprehension level. His difficulties are not as severe as those of Learner 2 but they do give evidence of a moderate early reading problem. He is not a candidate for a one-on-one program, but he does need a word analysis assessment to see what sound-symbol pairings he has not mastered.

Time taken for diagnostic reading assessments can pay off in focused lessons that give learners the best opportunity to become better readers in the shortest amount of time.

Readings Assigned for Session Three

Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials

Understanding what reading is all about: Teaching materials and lessons for adult basic education learners. (2005). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL. Available at: www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/uwriaa.pdf

Overview – Lesson by Lesson

LESSON ONE: THE DEMANDS OF READING
Learners will review their own reading habits and strategies and will identify the kinds of reading they would like to improve.

LESSON TWO: GOALS FOR READING, PART 1
Learners will be able to explain the role reading plays in their lives, by identifying the kinds of text they need or want to read regularly. They will also explore the role they would like reading to have in their lives by investigating what reading means to experienced readers.

LESSON THREE: GOALS FOR READING, PART 2
Learners will continue to explore what, how, and why experienced readers read and apply this knowledge to their own reading process. Learners will set reading goals in their roles as family members, workers, individuals, and community members.

LESSON FOUR: THE COMPONENTS OF READING
Learners will understand that reading is a developmental process, with several components. Learners will develop an awareness of their own stage of reading development. Learners will be able to identify the skills they need to learn in order to become proficient readers.

LESSON FIVE: ANALYZING WORDS
Students will learn how to use (and practice) the following word analysis strategies: Wilson Reading System "tapping strategy" to divide words into individual sounds; "word family" approach for decoding; and base word and suffix identification. Learners will reflect on which strategies they find most useful.

LESSON SIX: READING WORDS BY SIGHT
Students will learn a "sky writing" strategy for reading phonetically irregular "sight words."

LESSON SEVEN: READING WITH FLUENCY

Students will learn about the role reading fluency plays in proficient reading. Students will learn about the importance of reading often as a way to promote fluency. Students will learn how to use the Wilson "scooping" strategy to promote reading fluency.

LESSON EIGHT: DEVELOPING READING VOCABULARY

Students will understand the important role vocabulary plays in reading. Students will learn how to use the following strategies for learning new vocabulary: use context clues to "guess" the meaning of an unfamiliar word; use knowledge of known words; use knowledge of prefixes.

LESSON NINE: DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION

Students will understand the important role comprehension plays in reading. Students will learn how to use the following strategies for understanding what they read: a "previewing" strategy to establish a context for new information; a "post-reading questioning" process to assimilate new information; an "imaging" strategy to promote understanding.

LESSON TEN: DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL READING PROFILE

Learners will analyze their strengths and needs in each component of reading. Learners will become more aware of the specific skills they need to work on to become proficient readers.

LESSON ELEVEN: REVIEWING THE INDIVIDUAL READING PROFILE

By meeting individually with the teacher, learners develop and refine their understanding of their reading strengths and needs and generate a plan for reaching their reading goals.

LESSON TWELVE: UNDERSTANDING LEARNING DISABILITIES

Students will acquire a better understanding of what it means to have a learning disability. Students will learn that learning disabilities have no bearing on intelligence. Students will learn about how they can get tested for a learning disability. Students will discuss some strategies for learning and living with a learning disability.

LESSON THIRTEEN: IMPROVING YOUR SPELLING (OPTIONAL)

Students will understand the role spelling plays in reading. Students will learn strategies for spelling phonetically regular and phonetically irregular words.

Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

Idea 1 Assess fluency using formal or informal measures to determine the need for training.

Idea 2 Provide fluency training with <u>guided oral repeated reading</u> of sounds, words, phrases, sentences, or passages at or just below the current reading level. The complexity of the material (single sounds vs. passages) depends on the reading level of the learner(s).

Idea 3 Fluency training should be intense, but limited to 10-15 minutes a day over an extended period of time. The adult literacy research does not currently reflect best practice in minimum or maximum total number of hours of training.

Idea 4 Fluency can be provided through accuracy/rate training or prosody/intonation training. ESL learners will likely benefit from both as their automatic decoding skills will improve with increased speed and comprehension skills will improve with feedback.

Fluency is a means to reading comprehension, not an end. Fluency is a prerequisite for gaining meaning from text. Instructors using fluency training enable readers to make a smooth transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn". In fact, research indicates a strong correlation between fluency and reading comprehension; however, training a learner to be a fluent reader is not the same as teaching the learner to comprehend. The relationship between oral reading accuracy and reading comprehension is somewhat dependent on the types of errors made by learners in their oral reading. Errors that change the meaning of the text are more directly related to reading comprehension than errors that do not change the meaning. Additionally, training a learner to be a fluent reader is not teaching them to speed-read. In speed-reading, words are skipped and the reader skims or scans the text with the goal of getting the gist as quickly as possible. Fluency training should be approached in the same way we learn to play a musical instrument, master a piece of music, or build athletic skills. In other words, **practice makes perfect!**

> **Note:** The strategy of using sustained silent reading to improve fluency is unsupported by research. Silent reading may be used to reinforce instruction and provide extra practice, but is not a reliable method for improving fluency.

FLUENCY TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The following activities are separated into rate and accuracy for beginning levels and prosody for intermediate/advanced levels. They include ideas for **modeling, providing, and varying** repeated reading for individuals or groups of adult learners.

Beginning Levels

Modeling Rate and Accuracy

The goal of modeling is to demonstrate appropriate rate and fluency as well as set up a positive and successful experience with oral reading.

Use a controlled text at or just below the current reading level of the individual or group. Low level learners may need to develop automaticity of single words (decodable and sight) before taking on text such as phrases, sentences, or passages. They may find text reading to be overwhelming at the beginning of fluency training (see variations).

Controlled text can be in the form of phrases, sentences, or passages. Begin by providing a brief summary of the new text and pre-teach new vocabulary words to facilitate comprehension. Read clearly, accurately, and at a reasonable pace so that learners may follow along. When using text, it is important to explain and model how good readers read groups of words instead of reading one word at a time. Occasionally make errors to show how good readers adjust for mistakes and makes corrections.

Providing Repeated Reading of Text

Step 1. Give learners a copy of the modeled text or a different text at the same level. This means learners can read the text with 90% accuracy, or only 1 in 10 words are difficult.

Step 2. Have learners orally practice the text several times until the desired WCPM is reached.

It may be that after 3-4 readings, learners will have made the greatest gain they will make for that particular passage; therefore, it is helpful to have multiple passages at the same level in case they get bored.

The "coach" (ideally the instructor or a tutor) stops the reading whenever a mistake is made and provides the opportunity for self-correction. If learners cannot self-correct, correction is provided.

Step 3. The coach completes one minute timings individually.

All deviations from the text are counted and marked: self-corrections, repetitions, omissions, insertions, substitutions, or mispronunciations.

These errors are subtracted from the total number of words read for the WCPM. For example, 102 words/minute – 8 errors = 94 WCPM. Record or graph the final WCPM data.

Step 4. The coach checks comprehension by asking 3-5 short questions.

Step 5. Once the predetermined accuracy and rate goal is accomplished, the coach moves learners to the next level of text.

Intermediate/Advanced Levels

Modeling Prosody

The goal of modeling is to demonstrate appropriate fluency and prosody as well as set up a positive and successful experience with oral reading.

The coach (ideally the instructor or tutor) begins with a brief summary of the new text and pre-teaches vocabulary words to facilitate comprehension. Then the coach reads the text aloud using syntactic and rhythmic cues in phrases and sentences.

It is important to read aloud a variety of materials and model different types of expression (suspense, humor, surprise, fear, etc.) based on the type of writing (poetry, speech, mystery, non-fiction, fairy tales, etc.).

Providing Repeated Reading

Step 1. Using the same text as modeled, have learners break the sentences from a passage into phrases by using slash marks between phrases or loops underneath phrases to indicate the chunking. Alert them to punctuation marks that signal pauses, emphasis, questioning, or strong feeling.

Step 2. Have learners orally reread the passage to each other or as a group and attempt to mirror the modeled phrasing, rhythm, and expression.

Step 3. After each reading, the coach should give learners feedback on how closely their reading matched the modeling.

Step 4. Continue with reading and feedback until prosody of the passage is accomplished.

Step 5. Have the coach rate the learner's oral reading individually using the 1-4 system on the scale. Record the final data.

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Vocabulary

Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

Idea 1 Select high frequency words for general language use or words specific to content material. Don't assume that a publishing company has chosen the best vocabulary words for your learners.

Idea 2 Introduce new words by theme or category.

Idea 3 Help learners develop personal connections to new words. All learners will be more successful in retaining words if they are of interest and relate to their daily lives.

Idea 4 Teach independent strategies for learning new words. Provide explicit instruction in how to define important vocabulary words using context clues and dictionaries.

Idea 5 Provide multiple exposures to words through discussion, word play, categorizing, mapping, word sorts, sentence writing, story writing, crossword puzzles, etc.

Idea 6 Expose learners to a "word-rich" environment through varied listening, speaking, reading, writing, and computer-based activities.
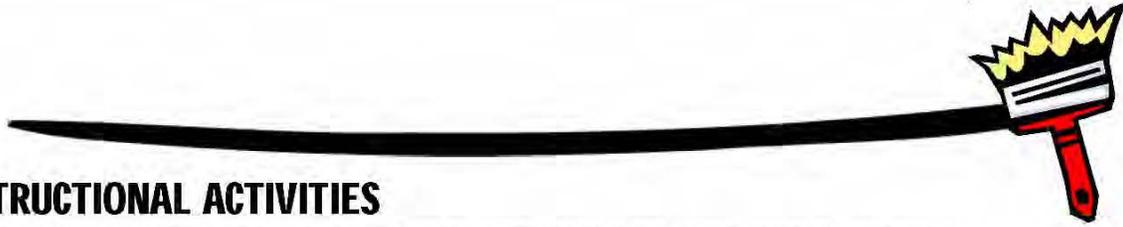
INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

On the following pages are a variety of recommendations and instructional activities that parallel the key six ideas listed in the Research Findings section. Many of them are favorites of LDA instructional staff.

Select high frequency words for general language use or words specific to content material.

1. Take a few minutes each day for learners to share new words they encountered outside of class. Write the word, read the word, and discuss the meaning and use of the word.

2. Prioritize and pre-teach vocabulary words and meanings that are high frequency and/or appear in many settings or content areas.

3. Read through the text or publisher's vocabulary list and give priority to words that are most relevant and useful. Textbooks often have a list of 20-30 words at the beginning or end of a chapter. Sift through words and **select 10 or 12 words** for instruction.

4. Teach common metaphors, idioms, similes, and analogies. There are great resources on the Internet for explaining common figurative language used in American English. Post a metaphor, idiom, simile, or analogy of the week on the board. Teach learners that analogies are relationships between words and most analogies fit the following relationships:

Beginning Level	**Intermediate Level**
Part to whole	Relationships of degree
Opposites	Result
Cause and Effect	Association
Action and Situation	Purpose
Person and Place	Characteristic

Help learners develop personal connections to new words.

1. Swap difficult or unfamiliar words with easier words that are familiar in meaning. These can be written down next to the more difficult word. Have learners box the difficult word and highlight the easier word(s) so that their eye is drawn to the word they are learning and its easier meaning.

2. If a text provides no unfamiliar words, develop a list of synonyms for several words to build vocabulary and add variety to the passage.

Sample passage with target words highlighted:

*Tony needed to **put** a box into his car. The box was **heavy**. He tried to lift the box. The next thing he knew, he could not move. He had **hurt** his back. It **hurt a lot.***

Target words:	Near synonyms:
put—	place, position, arrange
heavy—	enormous, backbreaking, weighty
hurt—	injure, thrown-out, wound
hurt a lot—	excruciating, severe, extreme

3. Have learners keep word journals or personal dictionaries. Word journals can be used to track encounters with new words, context clues, phrases, formal and informal uses for words, or images of the meaning of words.

Sample word journal entry:

Accumulated:
To gather, pile up
This word is more formal than pile-up. It can describe something that has piled up or it can refer to the act of things piling up.
P. 26   Leaves accumulated at the foot of the tree. . .
P. 45   The leftovers accumulated in the refrigerator until there was no room. . .
(TV ad) Don't wait for the bills to pile-up (accumulate) pay them now.
(dentist) There is an accumulation of tartar on your teeth.

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Decoding
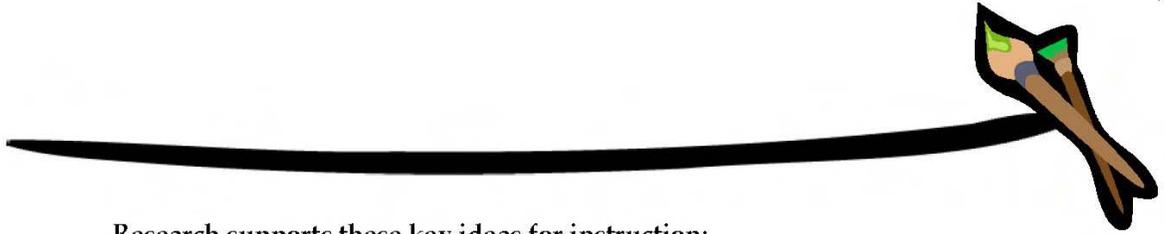
Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

Idea 1   Provide flexible strategy instruction for the decoding of multi-syllable words.

Idea 2   Provide extensive strategy practice in the decoding of multi-syllable words.

Idea 3   Include instruction of word parts such as prefixes or suffixes and their meanings.

Idea 4   *Always* apply the strategies to multi-syllable words from meaningful or authentic text.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in Research Findings, current research from secondary settings does not support the instruction of strict, complex syllabication rules, but rather emphasizes *flexibility* in instruction and decoding. Described below are four strategies for teaching adolescent or adult learners intermediate decoding skills. The best or preferred strategy is the decision of the instructor and learner.

Part-by-part Decoding Instruction

This strategy is focused on the idea that learners need to be taught to divide unknown, multi-syllable words into decodable parts or chunks based on their knowledge of familiar word patterns such as prefixes, suffixes, and base words.

In one variation of this strategy, affixes are introduced one by one and then applied to a corresponding list of multi-syllable words. Learners are taught to identify one or more familiar parts in the multi-syllable word, read the known parts first, and then figure out the whole word.

In another variation, learners are taught to break down unknown, multi-syllable words by looping or drawing loops underneath the decodable parts. This strategy could be applied to any content material the learner or a group of learners is working on. Unknown words from the text could be identified and then the instructor would model how to divide the words into decodable parts using prefixes, suffixes, and base words.

Pre-teaching the pronunciation of unknown words and vocabulary words will increase reading accuracy, fluency, and if repeated over time, will build independence in multi-syllabic decoding.

(*See Chapter 3: Toolkit 3-I for a reference list of high frequency prefixes and suffixes.)

(*See Chapter 3: Toolkit 3-J, K for corresponding lists of prefixed and suffixed words for guided practice.)

Syllable-type Instruction

This strategy is focused on teaching learners the different syllable types found within words. Learners are introduced to the six major syllable types found in the English language. They learn to read single-syllable words (*See Appendix 2*) and then apply that knowledge to multi-syllable words made up of combinations of those patterns. Extensive practice in multi-syllable words for reading and spelling is provided.

An easy way to remember the six types is syllables is the acronym CLOVER. They are presented on the following chart in suggested <u>order of introduction</u>, not the acronym order. The order of introduction corresponds with the beginning phonics sequence presented in Chapter Two.

Closed (C) - a syllable having a short vowel sound "closed" at the end by a consonant.
Examples: red, dish, scrap

Open (O) - a syllable with a single long vowel sound at the end.
Examples: go, she, try

Silent e (E) - a syllable with a long vowel sound ending with consonant-final e.
Examples: ate, hope, shine

R-controlled (R) - a syllable containing r-controlled vowels (ar, or, er, ir, ur, ear, our).
Examples: car, girl, purse

Consonant –le (L) - a final syllable containing a consonant-le (-ble, -ckle, -dle, -fle, -gle, -ple, -tle, -zle).
Examples: rifle, apple, turtle

Vowel pair or double vowel (V) - a syllable with a vowel combination (ai, ay, aw, oa, oo, oi, ou, ow, ee, ea, ie, ei, ue).
Examples: coat, feet, oil

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Comprehension

Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

Idea 1   Provide explicit instruction and coaching of comprehension strategies
        using meaningful, authentic, and considerate text.

Idea 2   Spend time developing vocabulary and prior knowledge. It is better to
        dive deep into a single topic than to lightly cover multiple topics.

Idea 3   *Always* teach learners why the strategy is important, when, and how to
        use it with meaningful or authentic text.

Idea 4   Teach learners to identify comprehension breakdowns and how to fix
        them by asking and answering self-generated questions.

Idea 5   Show learners how strategies build upon each other and should be used
        flexibly given the type of material being read and the purpose for
        reading.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Beginning Levels

Finding What You Know (before and during reading)

The reader activates prior knowledge by reading titles and headings and thinking about what is already known about the topic. This strategy has been shown to have a significant effect on literal and inferential comprehension with poor readers. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it helps readers link new knowledge with prior knowledge and gives them a framework for understanding what they read. Poor readers do not spontaneously activate prior knowledge when they read.

Instructional Tips:

> Impulsive or impatient readers will skip this strategy because they think it is busy work. Have them turn to a classmate and discuss what they know before allowing them to begin reading or read on.

Instructional Steps:

> **Step 1.** Before reading, have learners look at the title and think about or discuss what the text may present.
>
> **Step 2.** As the text is read, have learners think about or discuss personal experiences similar to what is presented in the text.

Think-a-loud:

> *"Before I start reading, I look at the title and think about what the book or text will be about and what I will learn from it. Sometimes I even skim through the book looking at chapter titles, pictures or graphics and think about what they are showing. While I am reading, I think to myself, 'How does this match with my own experience(s)?' Sometimes what I read does not match with what I know. When this happens, I slow down, reread, and ask myself questions."*

Setting a Purpose (before and during reading)

The reader guesses or predicts what information will be presented, what will happen next, or what will be learned from reading. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it helps readers understand they need to be active participants in comprehending what the author is trying to say. Readers with learning disabilities or who are struggling with comprehension typically do not make predictions, set a purpose for reading, or have a goal for reading. They are less mindful of breakdowns in comprehension because they are not actively working to understand the text. This strategy teaches readers to monitor their comprehension, create meaning, and develop their own interpretations of the text.

Instructional Tips:

Some readers may think this is busy work and takes too much time. Explicitly model this strategy and explain how it does make a difference in their comprehension.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Before reading, have learners look at the titles, subtitles, headings, or table of contents and think about or discuss what will be presented in the text. Learners can take titles or headings and turn them into 'Why' questions as they read. If necessary, have learners write down the why questions as part of a note-taking strategy. They should be able to answer the why questions before reading the next heading and text.

Step 2. As the text is read, have learners relate or discuss personal experiences to the topic or details in the texts (application of finding what I know). Continue to ask if the answer to the question has been discovered.

Think-a-loud:

"Before I start reading, I think about what I already know and what questions I hope to answer. When I am reading for fun, I don't take much time doing this. When I am reading for an assignment or to solve a problem, I start reading by turning the title into a 'Why' or 'So what is important about...' question. This step is really important because it helps me focus on what I am reading. It also helps me know when I am reading, but not understanding, because I can't answer the question. While I am reading, I think to myself, 'How does this match with my own experience(s) or what I already know?' Sometimes what I read does not match what I know. When this happens, I slow down, reread, and ask myself questions. When I am reading to find an answer, I read to the end of the paragraph and ask myself if I have found the answer. Sometimes I may ask myself, 'So what does that have to do with the topic or what I am trying to find?' If I have been reading for a while and I forget what I was reading for, I stop and remind myself of my purpose. Then I reread the parts I just finished. I do this because I may have missed what I was looking for or not understood what I was reading."

Intermediate/Advanced Levels

Understanding Text Cues (before and during reading)

In many elementary textbooks, important information is presented in illustrations. In secondary level materials, important information is signaled by text cues such as font size, font color, font style, boldface, or italics. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it teaches readers to organize factual information in a way that makes the details more meaningful and easy to remember.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Teach learners that the format of text headings tells you about how important the information is and whether it is a topic or supporting detail.

Step 2. Teach learners that important vocabulary terms are often printed in bold or italics.

Step 3. Teach learners about transitional cues or connectors. Examples are: before, after, during, therefore, etc. These words or phrases connect ideas, tell when something happened, tell where something happened, add more information, explain cause and effect, and provide a summary or contrast. They can be listed by category on word walls or in handouts. Reinforce connector cues by having learners include them in their writing. (*See Chapter 6: Toolkit 6-T for a Connector Cue handout.*)

Think-a-aloud:

"When reading a textbook or informative article, there are cues authors use to tell us how the information is organized and what is important. Let's look at some sample chapters or articles. In two seconds, who can tell me what the chapter will be about? What does the font tell you about the whole chapter? Let's try a more challenging question. How does the author identify key vocabulary terms you need to know on this page? Remember the author only suggests these words. How else do authors identify key vocabulary words? Let's make a note in our word journals that we should look for these cues to tell us important vocabulary terms."

Asking Questions (during reading)

The reader poses questions while reading as a means of comprehension monitoring, making meaning, establishing a purpose, connecting with prior knowledge, filtering relevant from irrelevant information, and comparing new understanding with old. This strategy is most important when readers are being introduced to new content and vocabulary. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it requires readers to take a more active role in making meaning and when used appropriately, cues the reader as to when comprehension breaks down.

The most useful types of questions to teach are learner-generated. Learner-generated questions come from what learners hope to find as they read. These questions emerge from setting a purpose for reading and are continuously created during the act of reading. As learners progress to more challenging text, the questions generate answers that need to be written down for later study or review.

Instructional Steps:

> **Step 1.** Explicitly teach learners to generate questions while they read. The questions should make predictions, clarify misunderstandings, and develop personal connections with text.
>
> Example questions:
> > What am I supposed to take away from or get out of this reading?
> > What will I be responsible for knowing after I read this?
> > How does this connect to what I learned before?
> > What isn't clear about what I am reading?
> > Is that a vocabulary word I need to know?
> > What details does the author use to support his/her viewpoint?
> > Is evidence supported by reliable resources?
>
> **Step 2.** Explicitly teach learners there are many ways to ask the same question. Teach cue words that they should read for and perhaps underline as they read. (*See Chapter 6: Toolkit 6-U for a Question Category handout.*)

Think-a-loud:
> *"When I am reading, I am constantly asking myself questions about what I am reading. I do this to make sure I understand what I read. If I don't ask myself questions, I find that I can read an entire page and not have a clue about what I read."*

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STEPS FOR FACILITATING SESSION THREE

Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to…

- Explain the reasons and identify tools for assessing and profiling adult readers' skills.

- Utilize activities for introducing adult learners to the four components of reading instruction.

- Propose steps they will take next for teaching reading to adults.

- Analyze the supports and constraints they may face as they take steps to change how they teach reading to adults.

- Generate a plan for the group's next steps.

Time: 3½ hours

Preparation:

⬒ **NEWSPRINTS** (Prepare ahead of time: <u>Underlined</u> in the steps)

___ Session Three Objectives

___ Session Three Agenda

___ Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies (NOTE: The questions listed in this newsprint can also be used for the alternative activity involving the ARCS Study video.)

___ Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints

___ Ideas for Our Group's Next Steps

Newsprints from Session One:

___ Alphabetics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension (four separate newsprints)

___ What I Hope to Get from the Study Circle

▯ **HANDOUTS** (Photocopy ahead of time: *Italicized* in the steps)

___ Some Examples of Next Steps for a Plan of Action

___ List of Reading-Related Web Sites

MATERIALS

___ 4″ x 6″ sticky-note pads (or blank strips of paper)

___ blank newsprint sheets

___ newsprint easel

___ markers, pens, tape

___ the Adult Reading Component Study Video

___ sticky dots

Steps:

1. ### WELCOME, SESSION THREE OBJECTIVES,
    ### AND AGENDA   (10 MINUTES)

Another Idea

Ask if any participants tried to explicitly address one of the components of reading instruction with students. If so, invite them to share their experiences with the group.

- **Welcome participants back to the study circle.** If the group is fairly large and a significant amount of time has passed since the last meeting, you may want to ask participants to re-introduce themselves.

    Ask each participant to share a thought or question they have about teaching reading to adults.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session Three Objectives</u>. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

> **Session Three Objectives**
>
> By the end of this session, you will be able to:
>
> - Explain the reasons and identify tools for assessing and profiling adult readers' skills
>
> - Utilize activities for introducing adult learners to the four components of reading instruction
>
> - Propose steps you will take next for teaching reading to adults
>
> - Analyze the supports and constraints you may face as you take steps to change how you teach reading to adults
>
> - Generate a plan for the group's next steps.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Session Three Agenda</u>. Describe each activity briefly. Ask if people have any questions about the agenda.

Session Three Agenda

- Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Overview of Agenda (Doing)

- Assessing and Developing Reading Profiles of Adult Learners

- Discuss the Usefulness of *Understanding What Reading Is All About*

- Making an Individual Plan of Action

- Taking New Steps: Supports and Constraints

- A Plan for Our Group

- Final Evaluation

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2. ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING READING PROFILES OF ADULT LEARNERS   (60 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that the purpose of the next activity is to discuss research about the specific reading profiles of adult learners and to look at one resource for developing profiles of adult learners with whom they work. *If you want the group to view the Adult Reading Component Study video instead of doing the small group discussion activity, this is the time to do so. See Another Idea.* ➡

- 📖 **Refer participants to two readings assigned for session three: Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief** and **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Ask them to form small groups according to the categories of learners in the study:

  - Teachers of adults with GED/Pre-GED reading skills

Another Idea

Instead of dividing into small groups to discuss the research, show the NCSALL ARCS Study video (on DVD) to the whole group. You will need a TV and DVD player, OR a computer that can play DVDs and a projector. The video takes about 25 minutes. At the end of the video, use the questions in this activity to lead a whole group discussion about the ARCS study, the Component Skills/IALS study, and the Reading Profiles Web site.

- Teachers of adults with intermediate reading skills

- Teachers of adults with low-level/beginning reading skills

- Teachers of ESOL students

Groups should have no less than three members, so you may need to negotiate the groups until they are formed.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies</u>. In their small groups, ask participants to spend 40 minutes to discuss the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS studies, guided by the questions on the newsprint.

Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies

- What questions do you have about the research findings from the ARCS Study? From the Component Skills/IALS? (Try to answer your questions among your group.)

- Do you agree with the implications presented in the study? Why or why not?

- What might these implications mean for your teaching?

- How do you think these findings fit with the different models of reading instruction (skills-based, comprehension-driven, and integrated)?

- **After 40 minutes, bring the small groups back together as a whole group.** Ask each small group to say a few sentences highlighting what was covered in their discussion.

- 📖 **Ask participants to pull out the Reading Assigned for Session Three: Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site)** (a NIFL-supported Web site based on the ARCS), which is meant to help teachers take information they may have about learners and develop reading profiles that may provide

direction for instruction. Ask how many participants had the opportunity to visit the Web site. Ask those participants who went to the ARCS Web site to talk about what they found there.

- **Facilitate a whole-group discussion for 15 minutes,** using the following questions as a guide:

  ? *Given your own teaching situation, how might this Web site be helpful to planning instruction for the learners with whom you work?*

  ? *What would support you or hinder you from using this Web site?*

  ? *What additional information do you need, and how might you find it?*

3. DISCUSS USEFULNESS OF THE *UNDERSTANDING WHAT READING IS ALL ABOUT* TEACHING MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)

- **Refer participants to the Reading Assigned for Session Three: Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials.** Explain that these are actual lesson plans they can use in their classes to help adult learners understand the reading process. Some adult learners think that reading is a mysterious process, or that it's about "being smart." Most do not know that it is a set of skills and practices that, while used as a whole in everyday reading, can be broken down into areas to concentrate on as they're learning to read. These teaching materials allow adult learners to think metacognitively about reading itself. Research indicates that learners who have a metacognitive understanding of reading may be more successful at reaching their goals for reading.

- **Facilitate a brief discussion in the whole group** about these materials, using the following questions as a guide:

  ? *What are some of the advantages of helping adult students to understand the components of the reading process?*

? *What are some of the disadvantages of helping adult students understand the components of the reading process?*

- **Remind participants that they can get the complete teaching materials guidebook at the NCSALL Web site**: www.ncsall.net.

BREAK (15 minutes)

4. MAKING AN INDIVIDUAL PLAN OF ACTION (45 MINUTES)

Another Idea

Conduct a brainstorming session with the entire group to generate this list of action steps.

- **Tell participants that, in this next activity, they will be working in pairs to develop the next steps they would like to take for teaching reading to adults in their own instructional setting or program.** Suggest that, for example, one step could include learning more about reading research. Tell them they will have 20 minutes to work on their lists.

- **Repost the four newsprints from Session One,** <u>Alphabetics</u>, <u>Fluency</u>, <u>Vocabulary</u>, <u>Comprehension</u>, for participants to review to inform their next steps. Also, ask participants to refer to the Reading Assigned for Session Three: **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension,** which provide some specific strategies for instruction related to improving fluency, vocabulary, decoding, and comprehension skills. Participants may get some concrete ideas for next steps to take in their classrooms from these readings.

- 🗋 **Hand out** *Some Examples of Next Steps for a Plan of Action.* Explain that these are some examples of "next steps" that participants/teachers in other study circles have generated. Give participants a few moments to read them silently.

- **Divide the whole group into pairs,** preferably pairing teachers who teach in the same context (e.g., two ESOL teachers, two GED teachers, etc.). Explain that they will have 20 minutes to make an individual plan for the next steps or actions. Each teacher should make some notes on paper. Remind participants that they will be asked to share something from their plan with the whole group.

- **After 20 minutes, reconvene the whole group.** Ask the first pair to read aloud one idea for next steps, then write it on newsprint (paraphrasing for the newsprint may be necessary). Ask the next pair to read aloud one idea, then add that idea to the newsprint list. Continue around the group, going back to every pair until a list of all the ideas that participants wish to share has been written on the newsprint.

- **Have participants consider the help they may need** to implement the next steps; for example, materials, resources, contact with other teachers, etc. Encourage discussion about ways to get supports that are needed.

- Revisit what participants wanted to get out of this study circle by **reposting the newsprint from Session One** <u>What I Hope to Get from the Study Circle</u>. Talk about the extent to which these hopes were met. If not met, could any of them be addressed by adding something to "Next Steps?"

- 🗎 **Distribute the handout** *List of Reading-Related Web Sites*, and suggest that participants look at these Web sites for additional resources, particularly if one of their next steps calls for finding more information.

**5. TAKING NEXT STEPS: SUPPORTS AND CONSTRAINTS** (30 MINUTES)

- **Explain that the next activity is called a "force field analysis."** It will help them to brainstorm and strategize

about how to deal with those factors that would hinder or support them in implementing their next steps.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints</u>.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">+</td><td align="center">–</td></tr>
</table>
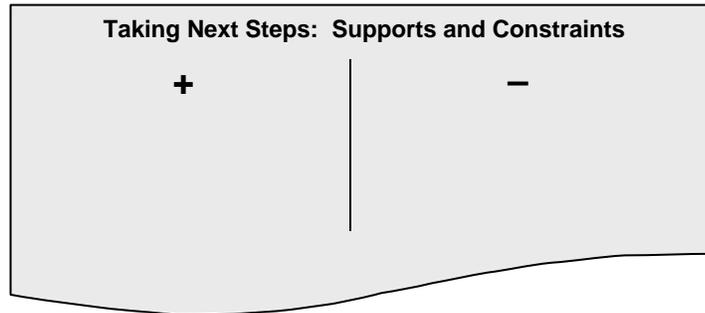
- **Ask the group to brainstorm the constraints (factors that hinder) they may face when taking their next steps for teaching adults to read.** These may be classroom constraints, program constraints, lack of time to prepare lessons, or policy constraints. Write each constraint mentioned under the "minus" sign on the right side of the newsprint. Take no more than five minutes to list constraints.

- **Then, ask the group to brainstorm all of the supports (factors that help) for taking their next steps.** Write these on the left side of the newsprint under the "plus" sign.

- **Lead a discussion with the whole group about how constraining forces could be reduced, and how supporting forces could be increased.** This discussion should be based on the notion that many constraining forces cannot be removed or eliminated (such as lack of time) but, rather, may be reduced or lessened through actions the teachers or their programs can take.

6.   A PLAN FOR OUR GROUP   (30 MINUTES)

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Ideas for Our Group's Next Steps</u>**.**
  Explain that now that the individual participants have
  plans for what they will do when back in their classrooms
  and programs, the group should make a plan about its
  next steps.

> **Ideas for Our Group's Next Steps**
>
> - Schedule a follow-up meeting to share what happened
>   when participants implemented their individual plans.
>
> - Organize an e-mail list so participants can stay in touch
>   and share ideas.
>
> - Summarize what the group learned—something
>   practical—that can be shared with other practitioners or
>   policymakers in its programs or in the state, such as:
>
>   – A list of the group's most preferred reading strategies,
>   discussed during this study circle
>
>   – A list of policy or program structure changes that
>   would better support teaching reading to adults

- **Ask the group members if they want to add other ideas** to
  this list for the group to consider. Write them up on the
  newsprint. When the list is complete, suggest to the group
  members that they choose one or two to implement, and
  that you will use "dot" voting to do this.

- **Hand out a sticky "dot" to each participant** and ask them
  to put their dot next to the idea they would most like the
  group to do. If they don't want to do any of the activities,
  they should not put their "dot" on the newsprint.

- **Lead the group in organizing its choice:**

  - <u>If the group chose to schedule a follow-up meeting</u>,
    set the date, time, and place for the meeting, and
    brainstorm an agenda for the meeting. Determine

Note to Facilitator

If the group chooses to
schedule a follow-up
meeting or an e-mail
list, then the third
option—producing a
summary—can be
done at the follow-up
meeting or via e-mail.
If the group decides
not to meet again,
participants could
brainstorm a summary
in the next few
minutes.

who will definitely be coming and who will take the responsibility to cancel the meeting in case of bad weather.

- <u>If the group chose to organize an e-mail list</u>, pass around a sheet for everyone to write his/her e-mail address. Decide who is going to start the first posting, and discuss what types of discussions or postings people would like to see (e.g., questions about how to try out something in their classroom, describing what happened after they tried it, sharing other resources they might find about reading instruction, etc.).

- <u>If the group chose to produce a summary of what they learned or a list of strategies or policy changes</u>, put up a blank sheet of newsprint and start the brainstorm. When the brainstorm is finished, have participants decide as a group what they want to do with the list (e.g., someone type it up and send around to people so they can share it with other teachers in their program; send it to the State Department of Education to reprint in the state newsletter; send it with someone's program director to the next statewide directors' meeting; forward to the next reading study circle organized by the state, etc.).

7. FINAL EVALUATION   (10 MINUTES)

- **Ask each person individually to comment on the most useful idea or concept** they will walk away with from this study circle.

- **Then ask if participants have suggestions for improving the study circle.** These suggestions may be related to:

  - *Process* (e.g., the activities, the way readings were organized, etc.)

- *Content* (e.g., the specific readings chosen, the clarity or richness of the readings or handouts, the focus of the discussions, etc.)

- **Take notes** as people talk so that you can adapt or adjust the next study circle. Feel free to add your own suggestions.

- **Refer participants to the NCSALL Web site** (www.ncsall.net) for further information. Point out that NSCALL publications may be obtained by contacting NSCALL at World Education: ncsall@worlded.org.

- Thank everyone for coming and participating in this study circle.

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Three

1. **Welcome, Session Three Objectives, and Agenda**	*10 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Post newsprints; review.

2. **Assessing and Developing Reading Profiles of Adult Learners**	*60 mins., SMALL GROUP then WHOLE GROUP (if discussion)* *60 mins., WHOLE GROUP (if video)*

- Refer to two readings: ARCS Research Brief and Component Skills/IALS Research Brief.
- Form small groups according to the type of students participants teach.
- Post the newsprint <u>Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies</u>; spend 40 minutes in small groups discussing the research.
- Regroup; brief report on highlights from each smaller group.
- Refer to reading: Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site).
- Whole group discussion:
  - **?** *Given your own teaching situation, how might this Web site be helpful to planning instruction for the learners with whom you work?*
  - **?** *What would support you or hinder you from using this Web site?*
  - **?** *What additional information do you need, and how might you find it?*

OR

- Show ARCS Video (25 minutes); whole group discussion using questions on newsprint and in guide for this activity.

3. **Discuss Usefulness of the *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials**	*10 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Discuss importance of metacognitive understanding of reading.
- Whole group discussion:
  - **?** *What are some of the advantages of helping adult students to understand the components of the reading process?*
  - **?** *What are some of the disadvantages of helping adult students to understand the components of the reading process?*

15-Minute Break

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Three

4. Making an Individual Plan of Action	45 mins., PAIRS, then WHOLE GROUP

- Repost newsprints <u>Alphabetics</u>, <u>Fluency</u>, <u>Vocabulary</u>, <u>Comprehension</u> from Session One; refer to reading **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension**; hand out *Some Examples of Next Steps for a Plan of Action*; review.

- Divide into pairs by teaching context; give pairs 20 minutes to make individual plan of action or next steps; come back ready to share one idea for steps.

- Regroup; go round robin, pair to pair, hearing one step and recording on newsprint, until all of the ideas participants wish to share are listed.

- Repost newsprint <u>What I Hope to Get from This Study Circle</u>; ask them if goals met, consider what else they need.

- Distribute the handout *List of Reading-Related Web Sites.*

5. Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints	30 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post the newsprint <u>Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints</u>.

- Conduct force field analysis (brainstorm supports, brainstorm constraints, strategize how to increase supports and reduce constraints).

6. A Plan for Our Group	30 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post the newsprint <u>Ideas for Our Group's Next Steps</u>.

- Ask if any new ideas; list.

- Dot vote.

- Take action on their choice (set up follow-up meeting, brainstorm summary, set up e-mail list, etc.).

7. Final Evaluation	10 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Ask each individual to comment (no more than one minute) on most useful concept they got from study circle.

- Ask for suggestions (process, content) for improving study circle.

- Remind them of NCSALL Web site (www.ncsall.net); thank them for participating.

Materials to Hand Out in Session Three

Contents

Some Examples of Next Steps for a Plan of Action

The following examples were generated by teachers and participants in previous Reading Study Circles:

- Locate more skills-based materials that are adult oriented

- Design a new intake form that gets more information about the learner as a reader

- Read aloud to my students

- Learn more about comprehension strategies and teach learners to use them

- Increase learners' awareness of alphabetics and phonics

- Learn more about guided and repeated oral reading strategies

- Gather examples of interviews used by other programs to develop learner profiles

- Learn more about teaching techniques for introducing the four components to learners

List of Reading–Related Web Sites

1. **LINCS: Literacy and Learning Disabilities Special Collection:**

   http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/teacher_tutor.htm

2. **NCSALL *Focus on Basics:* All articles related to reading:**

   www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=91

3 **EFF Toolkit:**

   http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc/

   - Look at pages on Examples: Read with Understanding:
     http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc/examples.htm

   - Look at pages on Standards, Reading with Understanding:
     http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc/pdf/01Read/pg_0001.htm

   - Look at Supports, Reading Strategies:
     http://cls.coe.utk.edu/efftlc/support_reading_strategies.htm

4. **The National Institute for Literacy Partnership for Reading site:** Strategies that are successful with children (and might be adapted for use with adults):

   www.nifl.gov/nifl/pfr.html

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING A FOLLOW–UP SESSION

If your group decides to meet again for a follow-up session, here are some suggestions for how to organize that session.

- **Suggest to the group that they choose a date for a follow-up session** that is far enough in the future so that participants have a chance to try something out in their classroom related to what they learned in this study circle (that is, to implement part of their individual plan) but not so far in the future that participants lose the "thread" or drift away from the work. A follow-up date of six to eight weeks is probably ideal.

- **Suggest to the group that participants should come to the follow-up session prepared to talk about what they did and what they learned from it.** In other words, rather than have a follow-up session simply to talk more about the research, the follow-up session could focus on sharing what participants have done and learned in implementing their individual plans.

- After Session Three but before the follow-up session, **send participants the following guiding questions for preparing to come and talk about what they may have tried** in their classrooms related to reading instruction. These questions could serve as a format for a written or oral update of teachers' experiences.

  1. What specific research finding related to reading instruction prompted you to try a new strategy in your classroom or program?

  2. Why did this research finding particularly interest you?

  3. In brief, what did the research finding recommend as an effective practice or policy?

  4. What instructional or program strategy did you decide to implement, based on this finding?

  5. How did you implement the strategy? What, specifically and step-by-step, did you do in your classroom or program?

6. What was the outcome of the strategy for the learners, for the program, and for you? What did you learn and what do you think the adult learners got from it?

7. What do you plan to do next?

- **Ask participants either to come prepared to talk about what they did,** using these questions as a guide, or to write up something that could be photocopied and shared with other teachers at the session.

- At the follow-up session, **ask each person whether they have** (a) **an experience to share** or (b) **a question to pose to the group.** Figure how much time you have and allot equal time to each participant either to:

  (a) describe what new strategy they tried in their classroom, share what they learned in doing this, and hear feedback, questions, and comments from their colleagues in the group; or

  (b) pose their question and facilitate a discussion among their colleagues that is designed to shed light on their question

TIPS FOR FACILITATING A STUDY CIRCLE

Contents

Materials from *A Guide for Training Study Circle Facilitators* (1998) by the Study Circles Resource Center:

- Key Facilitation Skills

- Good Study Circle Facilitators…

- Background Notes for Good Study Circle Facilitators

- The Importance of Neutrality

- Tips for Effective Discussion Facilitation

- Suggestions for Dealing with Typical Challenges

- Resource Brief: Leading a Study Circle

Key Facilitation Skills

- **Reflecting** – feeding back the content and feeling of the message. "Let me see if I'm hearing you correctly…"

- **Clarifying** – restating an idea or thought to make it more clear. "What I believe you are saying is…"

- **Summarizing** – stating concisely the main thoughts. "It sounds to me as if we have been talking about a few major themes…"

- **Shifting focus** – moving from one speaker or topic to another. "Thank you, John. Do you have anything to add, Jane?" "We've been focusing on views 1 and 2. Does anyone have strong feelings about the other views?"

- **Using silence** – allowing time and space for reflection by pausing between comments.

- **Using non-verbal and verbal signals** – combining body language and speech to communicate—for example, using eye contact to encourage or discourage behaviors in the group. Be aware of cultural differences. Neutrality is important here, so that we don't encourage some people more than others.

Good Study Circle Facilitators…

- are neutral; the facilitator's opinions are not part of the discussion.

- help the group set its ground rules, and keep to them.

- help group members grapple with the content by asking probing questions.

- help group members identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

- bring in points of view that haven't been talked about.

- create opportunities for everyone to participate.

- focus and help to clarify the discussion.

- summarize key points in the discussion, or ask others to do so.

And

- are self-aware; good facilitators know their own strengths, weaknesses, "hooks," biases, and values.

- are able to put the group first.

- have a passion for group process with its never-ending variety.

- appreciate all kinds of people.

- are committed to democratic principles.

Background Notes for "Good Study Circle Facilitators"

Study circles require a facilitator who can help focus and structure the discussion and, at the same time, encourage group ownership. The facilitator's main task is to create an atmosphere for democratic deliberation, one in which each participant feels at ease in expressing ideas and responding to those of others.

The study circle facilitator does not "teach" but instead is there to guide the group's process. He or she does not have to be an expert in the subject being discussed, but must know enough about it to be able to ask probing questions and raise views that have not been considered by the group.

Above all, **staying neutral and helping the group to do its own work are central to good study circle facilitation.** This takes practice and attention to one's own behaviors. Make sure to ask for the group's help in making this work well for everyone.

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The Importance of Neutrality*

- Act as if you are neutral; *practice* neutrality.

- Encourage and affirm each person.

- Explain your role.

- Be aware of your own "unconscious" behaviors.

- Resist the temptation to step out of the role of facilitator.

Tips for Effective Discussion Facilitation

BE PREPARED.

The facilitator does not need to be an expert on the topic being discussed, but should be the best prepared for the discussion. This means understanding the subject, being familiar with the discussion materials, thinking ahead of time about the directions in which the discussion might go, and preparing questions to help further the discussion.

SET A RELAXED AND OPEN TONE.

- Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

- Well-placed humor is always welcome, and helps to build the group's connections.

ESTABLISH CLEAR GROUND RULES.

At the beginning of the study circle, help the group establish its own ground rules by asking the participants to suggest ways for the group to behave. Here are some ground rules that are tried and true:

- Everyone gets a fair hearing.

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- One person speaks at a time.

- Share "air time."

- Conflict is not personalized. Don't label, stereotype, or call people names.

- Speak for yourself, not for others.

- What is said in this group stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that.

MONITOR AND ASSIST THE GROUP PROCESS.

- Keep track of how the group members are participating—who has spoken, who hasn't spoken, and whose points haven't been heard.

- Consider splitting up into smaller groups to examine a variety of viewpoints or to give people a chance to talk more easily about their personal connection to the issue.

- When deciding whether to intervene, lean toward non-intervention.

- Don't talk after each comment or answer every question; allow participants to respond directly to each other.

- Allow time for pauses and silence. People need time to reflect and respond.

- Don't let anyone dominate; try to involve everyone.

- Remember: A study circle is not a debate, but a group dialogue. If participants forget this, don't hesitate to ask the group to help re-establish the ground rules.

HELP THE GROUP GRAPPLE WITH THE CONTENT.

- Make sure the group considers a wide range of views. Ask the group to think about the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of looking at an issue or solving a problem.

- Ask participants to think about the concerns and values that underlie their beliefs and the opinions of others.

- Help the discussion along by clarifying, paraphrasing, and summarizing the discussion.

- Help participants to identify "common ground," but don't try to force consensus.

USE PROBING COMMENTS AND OPEN–ENDED QUESTIONS WHICH DON'T LEAD TO YES OR NO ANSWERS. THIS WILL RESULT IN A MORE PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION. SOME USEFUL QUESTIONS INCLUDE:

- What seems to be the key point here?

- What is the crux of your disagreement?

- What would you say to support (or challenge) that point?

- Please give an example or describe a personal experience to illustrate that point.

- Could you help us understand the reasons behind your opinion?

- What experiences or beliefs might lead a person to support that point of view?

- What do you think people who hold that opinion care deeply about?

- What would be a strong case against what you just said?

- What do you find most persuasive about that point of view?

- What is it about that position that you just cannot live with?

- What have we missed that we need to talk about?

- What information supports that point of view?

RESERVE ADEQUATE TIME FOR CLOSING THE DISCUSSION.

- Ask the group for last comments and thoughts about the subject.

- Thank everyone for their contributions.

- Provide some time for the group to evaluate the study circle process.

Suggestions for Dealing with Typical Challenges

Most study circles go smoothly because participants are there voluntarily and have a stake in the program. But there are challenges in any group process. What follows are some of the most common difficulties that study circle leaders encounter, along with some possible ways to deal with those difficulties.

Problem: Certain participants don't say anything, seem shy.

Possible responses: Try to draw out quiet participants, but don't put them on the spot. Make eye contact—it reminds them that you'd like to hear from them. Look for nonverbal cues that indicate participants are ready to speak. Frequently, people will feel more comfortable in later sessions of a study circle program and will begin to participate. When someone comes forward with a brief comment after staying in the background for most of the study circle, you can encourage him or her by conveying genuine interest and asking for more information. And it's always helpful to talk with people informally before and after the session.

Problem: An aggressive or talkative person dominates the discussion.

Possible responses: As the facilitator, it is your responsibility to handle domineering participants. Once it becomes clear what this person is doing, you **must** intervene and set limits. Start by limiting your eye contact with the speaker. Remind the group that everyone is invited to participate; "Let's hear from some folks who haven't had a chance to speak yet." If necessary, you can speak to the person by name. "Charlie, we've heard from you; now let's hear what Barbara has to say." Be careful to manage your comments and tone of voice—you are trying to make a point without offending the speaker.

Problem: Lack of focus, not moving forward, participants wander off the topic.

Possible responses: Responding to this takes judgment and intuition. It is the facilitator's role to help move the discussion along. But it is not always clear which way it is going. Keep an eye on the participants to see how engaged they are, and if you are in doubt, check it out with the group. "We're a little off the topic right now. Would you like to stay with this, or move on to the next question?" If a participant goes into a

lengthy digression, you may have to say: "We are wandering off the subject, and I'd like to give others a chance to speak."

Problem: Someone puts forth information which you know to be false. Or, participants get hung up in a dispute about facts but no one present knows the answer.

Possible responses: Ask, "Has anyone heard of conflicting information?" If no one offers a correction, offer one yourself. And if no one knows the facts, and the point is not essential, put it aside and move on. If the point is central to the discussion, encourage members to look up the information before the next meeting. Remind the group that experts often disagree.

Problem: Lack of interest, no excitement, no one wants to talk, only a few people participating.

Possible responses: This rarely happens in study circles, but it may occur if the facilitator talks too much or does not give participants enough time to respond to questions. People need time to think, reflect, and get ready to speak up. It may help to pose a question and go around the circle until everyone has a chance to respond. Occasionally, you might have a lack of excitement in the discussion because the group seems to be in agreement and isn't coming to grips with the tensions inherent in the issue. In this case, the leader's job is to try to bring other views into the discussion, especially if no one in the group holds them. "Do you know people who hold other views? What would they say about our conversation?"

Problem: Tension or open conflict in the group. Perhaps two participants lock horns and argue. Or, one participant gets angry and confronts another.

Possible responses: If there is tension, address it directly. Remind participants that disagreement and conflict of ideas is what a study circle is all about. Explain that, for conflict to be productive, it must be focused on the issue: It is acceptable to challenge someone's ideas, but personal attacks are not acceptable. You must interrupt personal attacks, name-calling, or put-downs as soon as they occur. You will be better able to do so if you have established ground rules that disallow such behaviors and that encourage tolerance for all views. Don't hesitate to appeal to the group for help; if group members bought into the ground rules, they will

support you. As a last resort, consider taking a break to change the energy in the room. You can take the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the participants in question.

Resource Brief: Leading a Study Circle*

Once a study circle is underway, the study circle leader is the most important person in terms of success or failure. The leader guides the group toward reaching the goals that have been set by the organizer and the participants. It is the leader's responsibility to stimulate and moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive. The leader does not need to be an expert or even the most knowledgeable person in the group. However, the leader should be the most well-prepared person in the room. This means thorough familiarity with the reading material, preparation of questions to aid discussion, previous reflection about the directions in which the

> Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader.

discussion might go, knowledge of the people and personalities in the group, and a clear understanding of the goals of the study circle. The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay in order to listen to and truly hear participants. A background of leading small group discussion or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

BEGINNING

• *"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.* Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. The goals of the study circle should be discussed and perhaps modified in the first session, as should the ground rules for discussion. It is important that participants "buy in" right from the beginning.

• *Start each session with a brief review of the readings.* This is best done by a participant and will refresh the memories of those who read the session's material and include those who did not. Recapitulation of the main points will also provide a framework for the discussion.

MANAGING THE DISCUSSION

• *Keep discussion focused on the session's topic.* Straying too far could cause each session to lose its unique value. A delicate balance is best: Don't force the group to stick to the topic too rigidly, but don't allow the discussion to drift. Most people do not regard a "bull session" as a valuable use of their time.

• *Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.* Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• *Draw out quiet participants.* Do not allow anyone to sit quietly in the corner or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• *Be an active listener.* You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• *Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.* As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint. If you throw your weight behind the ideas on one faction in the study circle, your effectiveness in managing the discussion will be diminished.

• *Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.* Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep it narrowly focused on the issue at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel comfortable saying what they really think—even if it's unpopular.

• *Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.* People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

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• Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."
The point of a study circle is not to come up with an answer, but for the
participants to share their concerns and develop their understanding.
Don't set yourself up as the final arbiter. Let the group decide what it
believes and correct itself when a mistake is made.

• Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.
Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be
conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Often questions or
comments are directed at the leader, but they can be deflected to another
member of the group.

• Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally. It is helpful to
consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to
build upon.

USING QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

• Ask hard questions. Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old
assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to
re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points that have not been
mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• Utilize open-ended questions. Questions such as, "What other
possibilities have we not yet considered?" do not lend themselves to
short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet
members of the group.

CONCLUDING

• Don't worry about attaining consensus. It's good for the study circle to
have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve
consensus. In some cases a group will be split, and there's no need to
hammer out agreement.

• Close each session with a summary and perhaps an evaluation.
Remind participants of the overall goals of the program and ask them
whether the discussion helped the group to move toward those goals.
You will definitely want evaluations from the group at the midpoint of
the course and at the final session.

NCSALL FEEDBACK FORM FOR STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS[*]

1. Name of study circle conducted: _____

2. Location/site of your study circle: _____

3. When did your study circle meet?   Day: _____   Time: _____

4. How many times did your study circle meet? _____

5. Generally speaking, how satisfied have you been with your experience as a study circle facilitator?

    ☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Somewhat satisfied   ☐ Not at all satisfied

    Why?

6. What was your most satisfying experience as a study circle facilitator? Please provide an example:

7. What was your most frustrating experience as a study circle facilitator? Please provide an example.

8. In all, how many people participated in your study circle? _____
    (Count everyone who attended at least one session.)

    8a) How many people started with the first session? _____

    8b) How many of those people attended all the sessions? _____

    8c) How many people attended only one or two sessions? _____

9. How satisfied were your participants with the study circle process?
    ☐ Most participants seemed satisfied
    ☐ Most participants expressed dissatisfaction
    ☐ Most participants expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction at various points in the process
    ☐ I couldn't judge their levels of satisfaction

    Please explain:

---

[*] Adapted from Study Circles Resource Center Feedback Form.

NCSALL Feedback Form for Study Circle Facilitators (continued)

10. Did you have adequate support from the program organizers?

☐   Yes   ☐   No   ☐   Not sure

Please explain:

11. What additional support would have been helpful?

12. If you were to facilitate another study circle, what factors would you change (for example, discussion materials, activities, etc.)?

13. What difference has taking part in this study circle program made in you personally?

14. Other impressions, concerns, and comments:

Your name: (optional)_____

Return to:

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NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

NCSALL's Mission

NCSALL's purpose is to improve practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. NCSALL is meeting this purpose through basic and applied research, dissemination of research findings, and leadership within the field of adult learning and literacy.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education, World Education, The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Institute of Education Sciences (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

NCSALL's Research Projects

The goal of NCSALL's research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages, and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner persistence, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) professional development, and (4) assessment.

NCSALL's Dissemination Initiative

NCSALL's dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and scholars of adult education can access, understand, judge and use research findings. NCSALL publishes *Focus on Basics,* a quarterly magazine for practitioners; *Focus on Policy*, a twice-yearly magazine for policymakers; *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*, an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research, and best practices; and *NCSALL Reports* and *Occasional Papers*, periodic publications of research reports and articles. In addition, NCSALL sponsors the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research Initiative, designed to help practitioners and policymakers apply findings from research in their instructional settings and programs.

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