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** Purpose of the NCSALL Study Circles 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** Session One Objectives **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**
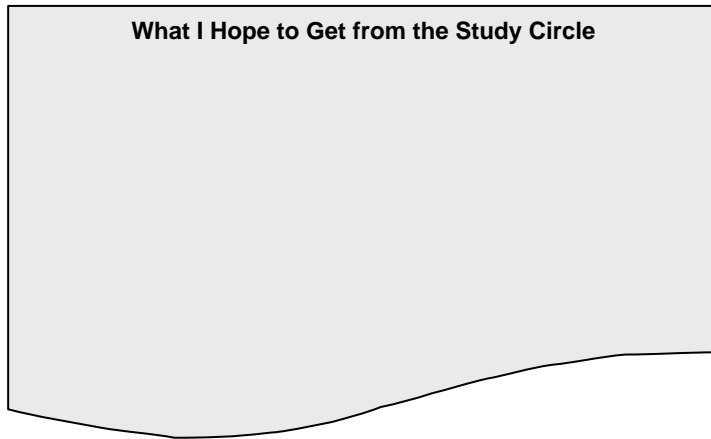
> **Ask each person to make a short statement in response to this question.** Write their statement on the newsprint as they say it. (If someone begins to talk about his or her teaching situation, etc., point to the <u>Session One Agenda</u> newsprint and remind them that there will be a chance to talk 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** Skills-Driven Model, Comprehension-Driven Model, **and** Integrated Model **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

Rationale: 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.

Beliefs:

Comprehension-Driven Model

Rationale: 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.

Beliefs:

Integrated Model

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

Beliefs:

- **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)

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)

Evidence	Quantitative	Qualitative

  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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

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.).

Note to Facilitator

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

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>.

Useful	How to Improve

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.

---

[*] 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.).

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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.

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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,"

"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.

REFERENCES

Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Adams, M.J. (1995). "Resolving the "great debate"." *American Educator*, 19(2).

Blackman, J., Bruck, M., Herbert, M., & Seidenberg, M. (1984). "Acquisition and use of spelling–sound correspondences in reading." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 38, 114–133.

Chall, J.S. (1967). *Learning to Read: The Great Debate.* New York: McGraw–Hill.

Chall, J.S. (1983). *Stages of Reading Development.* New York: McGraw–Hill.

Curtis, M.E. (1980). "Development of components of reading skill." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72, 656–669.

Ehri, L.C. (1992). "Reconceptualizing the development of sight word reading and its relationship to encoding." In P. Gough, L. Ehri, & R. Treiman (eds.), *Reading Acquisition* (pp. 107–144). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

Snow, C., & 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 for Adult Learning and Literacy*, Vol. 1, 25–69. San Francisco: Jossey–Bass, Inc.

Stanovich, K.E. (1986). "Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in acquisition of literacy." *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360–407.

Torgesen, J. (1998). "Catch them before they fall; Identification and assessment to prevent reading failure in young children." *American Educator*, 32–39.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashley Hager teaches a beginning- and intermediate-level reading class at the Community Learning Center, Cambridge, MA. She is also the Boston Region Young Adults with Learning Disabilities (YALD) Coordinator and teaches a 16-week, graduate-level course on the theory of reading. Ms. Hager has designed basic reading and foundations of reading and writing certification courses for the Massachusetts Department of Education

Reading Assigned for Session Two 📖

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

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

Equipped for the future

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE IS AN INITIATIVE OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY
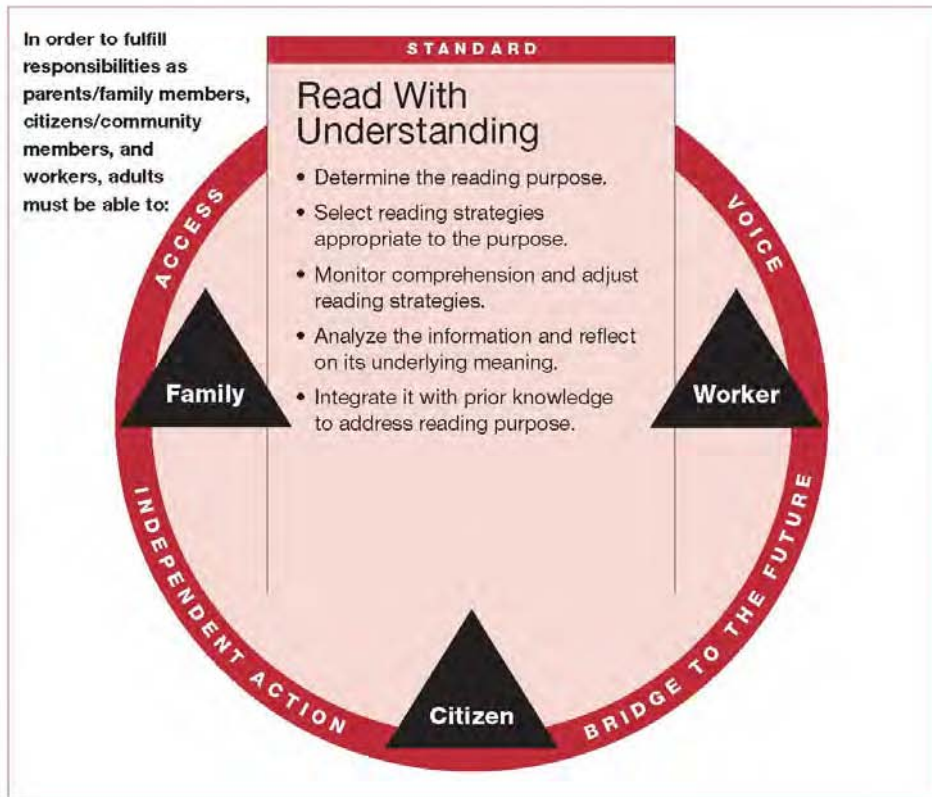
Read With Understanding,

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
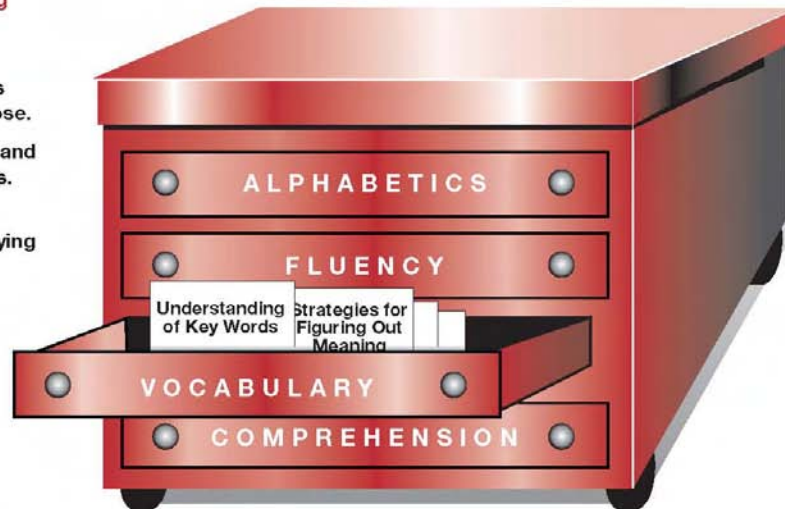
The Reader's Tool Chest

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.

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

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. ●

For more information, see: Burt, M.; Peyton, J.K.; Adams, R. (2003) *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research*. Washington, DC: The Center for Applied Linguistics. Copies of this publication can be requested for free from the Center for Applied Linguistics:
http://www.cal.org/ncle
Telephone: 202-362-0700

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 OUT THE PLAN

STEP 5. Carry out the learning activity.

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

PLANNING

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

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.

Please direct all correspondence including editorial comments to:
Beth Bingman
Publications Coordinator
EFF Center for Training and Technical Assistance
Center for Literacy Studies
600 Henley St, Suite 312
Knoxville, TN 37996
or Bingman@utk.edu

This issue was edited by
Meta Potts, National EFF Facilitator/ Consultant

Editorial team:
Amy Trawick, National EFF Facilitator; Coordinator, EFF Reading Project
Mary Dunn Siedow, National EFF Facilitator; Member of EFF Reading Project Team

Equipped for the Future is an initiative of the National Institute for Literacy.

NIFL
National Institute for Literacy

1775 I Street, Suite 730
Washington, DC 20006-2401
TEL 202-233-2025
FAX 202-233-2050
WEB www.nifl.gov

Online Resources

■ **The Equipped for the Future website** is a LINCS Special Collection. Visit this site to learn more about EFF, the NIFL's standards-based system reform initiative. The EFF website will provide you with information on such topics as: the history of EFF, the Content Framework and Standards, EFF publications, EFF resources, and EFF training events.
Site address: www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff

■ **The Equipped for the Future Online Discussion** features targeted discussion about the EFF initiative. Subscribe to the discussion, or read the archived messages for this or previous years. This online forum is the logical place to turn for EFF information and resources, and to join in the ongoing conversation about EFF by people using EFF.
Site address: www.nifl.gov/lincs.discussions/nifl4eff/equipped_for_future

You can also subscribe to the list by sending an e-mail message to: listproc@literacy.nifl.gov *(Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message type:* Subscribe NIFL-4EFF your first name your last name*)*

■ **Equipped for the Future publications** may be ordered from the ED Pubs Clearinghouse. EFF publications are free of charge, unless otherwise noted. Online versions of the documents can be accessed directly, including the *EFF Content Standards*, the *EFF Voice* newsletter, the *EFF Assessment Report*, and the *EFF Evaluation Report*. For the complete list of EFF publications and products, go to:
www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff_publications

■ **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

EFF**HOT**topics

1775 I STREET, SUITE 730
WASHINGTON, DC 2006-2401

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE $300

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

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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.

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (1994). *Beginning to read.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading.* Washington, DC: National Academy of Education, Commission on Education and Public Policy.

Blachman, B. A. (1994). What we have learned from longitudinal studies of phonological processing and reading, and some unanswered questions: A response to Torgesen, Wagner, and Rashotte. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 27, 287-291.

Blachman, B. A. (1997). Early intervention and phonological awareness: A cautionary tale. In B. A. Blachman (Ed.), *Foundations of reading acquisition and dyslexia.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bruck, M. (1990). Word recognition skills of adults with childhood diagnoses of dyslexia. *Developmental Psychology,* 26, 439–454.

Bruck, M. (1992). Persistence of adults' phonological awareness deficits. *Developmental Psychology,* 28, 874–886.

Chall, J. S. (1983). *Stages of reading development.* New York: McGraw–Hill.

Chall, J. S. (1994). Patterns of adult reading. *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal,* 5, 29–33.

Chall, J. S., & Curtis, M. E. (1990). Diagnostic achievement testing in reading. In C. R. Reynolds & R. W. Kamphaus (Eds.), *Handbook of psychological and educational assessment of children* (Vol. 1). New York: Guilford Press.

Chall, J. S., Jacobs, V., & Baldwin, L. (1990). *The reading crisis.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (1988, April 7). Acquisition of cognitive–academic language proficiency: A six–year study. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Cook, W. (1977). *Adult literacy education in the United States.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Curtis, M. E. (1980). Development of the components of reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 72, 656–669.

Fingeret, H. A. (1983). Social networks: A new perspective on independence and illiterate adults. *Adult Education Quarterly,* 33, 133–146.

Fink, R. (1998). Literacy development in successful men and women with dyslexia. Annals of Dyslexia, 48, 311–346.

Foorman, B., Francis, D. J., Shaywitz, S., Shaywitz, B., & Fletcher, J. (1997). The case for early intervention. In B. A. Blachman (Ed.), *Foundations of reading acquisition and dyslexia.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Fowler, A. E., & Scarborough, H. S. (1993). *Should reading disabled adults be distinguished from other adults seeking literacy instruction? A review of theory and research.* Philadelphia: National Center for Adult Literacy.

Harris, A. J., & Sipay, E. R. (1990). *How to increase reading ability.* New York: Longman.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hunter, C., & Harman, D. (1985). *Adult illiteracy in the United States.* New York: McGraw–Hill.

Johnson, D., & Blalock, J. (Eds.). (1987). *Adults with learning disabilities.* New York: Grune and Stratton.

Johnston, P. H. (1985). Understanding reading disability: A case study approach. *Harvard Educational Review,* 55, 153–177.

Kirsch, I., Jungeblut, A., Jenkins, L., & Kolstad, A. (1993). *Adult illiteracy in America: A first look at the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

Levine, M. (1994). *Educational care: A system for understanding and helping children with learning problems at home and in school.* Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (1995). *NAEP 1994 reading: A first look—Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (rev. ed.). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Ninio, A., & Snow, C. E. (1996). *Pragmatic development.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Office of Vocational and Adult Education. (1996). *1996 enrollment of participants by instructional programs.* Washington, DC: OVAE, U.S. Department of Education.

Perfetti, C. A. (1985). *Reading ability.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Pratt, A., & Brady, S. (1988). Relation of phonological awareness to reading disabilities in children and adults. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 90.

Read, C. (1988a). *Adults who read like children: The psycholinguistic bases. Report to the U.S. Department of Education.* Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Read, C. (1988b). *Phonological awareness and adult readers. Report to the U.S. Department of Education.* Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Read, C., & Ruyter, L. (1985). Reading and spelling skills in adults of low literacy. *Remedial and Special Education,* 6, 43–51.

Reder, S. (1995). *Literacy, education, and learning disabilities.* Philadelphia: National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania.

Reder, S. (1997). *First level learners: Characteristics and participation of adult basic literacy learners.* Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates.

Rosner, J. (1975). *Helping children overcome learning difficulties: A step-by-step guide for parents and teachers.* New York: Walker.

Roswell, F. G., & Chall, J. S. (1992). *Diagnostic assessments in reading.* Chicago: Riverside Press.

Roswell, F. G., & Chall, J. S. (1994). *Creating successful readers.* Chicago: Riverside Press.

Scholes, R. J. (1991). Phoneme deletion and literacy in native and non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Research in Reading,* 14, 130–140.

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. (1982). *Narrative, literacy, and face in interethnic communication.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Siegel, L. S. (1989). IQ is irrelevant to the definition of learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 22, 469–479.

Snow, C. E. (1983). Literacy and language: Relationships during the preschool years. *Harvard Educational Review,* 53, 165–189.

Snow, C. E., Burns, S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children. A report of the National Research Council.* Washington, DC: Academy Press.

Spear-Swerling, L., & Sternberg, R. J. (1996). Off track: When poor readers become "learning disabled." Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Spreen, O., & Haaf, R. G. (1986). Empirically derived learning disabilities subtypes: A replication attempt and longitudinal patterns over 15 years. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 19, 360–406.

Stanovich, K. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 21, 360–406.

Stanovich, K. (1991). Discrepancy definitions of reading disability: Has intelligence led us astray? *Reading Research Quarterly,* 26, 360–497.

Sticht, T. (1975). *A program of army functional job reading training: Development, implementation, and delivery systems* (HumRRO–FR–WD(CA)–75–7). Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Organization.

Sticht, T. (1987). *Functional context education: Workshop resource notebook.* San Diego, CA: Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences.

Sticht, T. (1988). Adult literacy education. In E. Rothkopf (Ed.), *Review of research in education.* Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Sticht, T. (1998). *Beyond 2000: Future directions for adult education.* El Cajon, CA: Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences.

Strucker, J. (1995). *Patterns of reading in adult basic education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.

Strucker, J. (1997). What silent reading tests alone can't tell you. *Focus on Basics,* 1, 13–17.

Tannen, D. (Ed.). (1982). *Spoken and written language: Exploring orality and literacy.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Tyler, J. H., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (forthcoming). *Estimating the impact of the GED on the earnings of young dropouts using a series of natural experiments.* Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

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

Fingeret, H.A. & Drennon, C. (1997). *Literacy for life: Adult learners, New practices.* New York: Teachers College Press.

* 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

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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

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

Sophie Degener is a doctoral student in language and literacy at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. She also works as a research analyst at the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research. Her primary research focus is family literacy.

Erik Jacobson is a research assistant at the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). He is the director of the PEERS Project at the Center for World Languages and Cultures at UMass.-Boston, and teaches adult ESOL at the Haitian American Public Health Initiative in Mattapan, MA.

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.