

STEPS FOR FACILITATING SESSION TWO

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

- Name specific techniques to teach the components of reading instruction to beginning-level adult readers, and evaluate reading instruction through the framework of Equipped for the Future.
- Analyze who adults are as readers within a skills-based and a socio-cultural context.
- Summarize and judge what the research says about the effect of contextualized instruction on literacy practices in adults' everyday lives.

Time: 3½ hours

Preparation:



NEWSPRINTS (Prepare ahead of time: Underlined in the steps)

- ___ Session Two Objectives
- ___ Session Two Agenda
- ___ Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers
- ___ Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-Level Readers
- ___ Information about Adult Readers
- ___ Research on Contextualized Instruction



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

- ___ Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

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

- ___ Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief
- ___ The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief
- ___ Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (Introduction to the ARCS Web site)
- ___ Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials
- ___ Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension

MATERIALS

- ___ several (3-4) sample copies of *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom*, available for downloading free from:
www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf
- ___ blank newsprint sheets
- ___ newsprint easel
- ___ markers, pens, tape

Steps:**Another Idea**

Ask participants to reintroduce themselves and share one revelation, reaction, or question they have about teaching reading to adults.

1. WELCOME, SESSION TWO OBJECTIVES, AND AGENDA (10 MINUTES)

- **Welcome participants** back to the study circle. If the group is more than a few people and a significant amount of time has passed since the last meeting, you may want to ask participants to re-introduce themselves.
- **Post the newsprint Session Two Objectives**. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

Session Two Objectives

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


- Name specific techniques to teach the components of reading instruction to beginning-level adult readers, and evaluate reading instruction through the framework of Equipped for the Future
- Analyze who adults are as readers within a skills-based and a socio-cultural context
- Summarize and judge what the research says about the effect of contextualized instruction on literacy practices in adults' everyday lives

- **Post the newspaper Session Two Agenda.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask participants if they have any questions about the agenda.

Session Two Agenda

- Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Overview of Agenda (Doing)
- Using the Components of Reading Instruction to Teach Beginning- and Intermediate-Level Readers
- Understanding Adults as Readers
- Looking at Literacy Practices and Contextualized Instruction
- Evaluation of Session Two and Assignment for Session Three

2. USING THE COMPONENTS OF READING INSTRUCTION TO TEACH BEGINNING- AND INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL READERS (60 MINUTES)

-  **Discussing the readings:** Explain that this next activity is based on two of the readings assigned for today's study circle session: **Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults** and **EFF Hot Topics: Read with Understanding**.

- **Explain that participants will work in two groups**, one group for those interested in talking about instruction for beginning-level readers and the other group for those interested in instruction for adults at higher reading levels. Each group will consider both readings. Have participants divide into these two groups.
- **Post the newspapers Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers and Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-level Readers**. Then ask small groups to spend 40 minutes discussing their responses to the questions for each reading (20 minutes per reading, starting with the article that corresponds to their group's focus: beginning-level or intermediate- to higher level):

Questions for Discussion: Beginning-Level Readers

- What techniques does the author suggest for teaching reading?
- How do you see the components of reading instruction in these techniques?
- What appeals to you about these techniques? What concerns you?
- In what ways might you adapt these techniques to fit your own teaching situation?

Questions for Discussion: EFF and Intermediate-Level Readers

- How might the EFF framework help you teach reading?
- How do you see the four components of reading integrated in the sample lesson by Cheryl Williams and Patricia Murchison's reading lesson?
- What ideas might this give you about how to approach reading instruction in your own classroom?


Ask for a volunteer from each group to take notes on the discussion in response to the questions.

- After 40 minutes, **ask each group to share their responses** to the questions with the other group.
- Then as a **whole group discuss the following questions:**
 - ? *How are these two approaches (Hager's for low-level readers, EFF for intermediate-level readers) similar and how do they differ?*
 - ? *How might either approach be adapted for the other reading level?*

BREAK (15 minutes)

3. UNDERSTANDING ADULTS AS READERS

(60 MINUTES)

-  **Discussing the readings:** Explain to participants that this activity will help them get a better understanding of adults as readers, as participants consider the reading process from different research perspectives. Reiterate that, up to this point, the study circle readings have been about reading research that focuses primarily on reading skills. Most of the research on reading is of this type. Yet there is also reading research, most of which is based on interviews and observations, that looks at reading instruction from a different angle (e.g., sociocultural perspectives). Rather than focusing on the components of reading instruction, research that views reading from a sociocultural perspective seeks to discover what people do in terms of reading in their daily lives.
- Participants will begin by comparing the profiles of two adult readers: Richard from **Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children for Adult Learning and Literacy** and Ann from **Literacy for Life: Adult Learners, New Practices**.
- **Explain that the participants will work in two groups** and have 15 minutes to review and talk about these two profiles. Suggest that they count off by twos to create the

groups. When the groups have been formed, have them begin by silently reviewing or quickly reading for the first time the two profiles.

- After three or four minutes, **ask the groups to spend the next 15 minutes comparing and contrasting the two profiles** and considering their response to the following question:
 - ? *What can you learn about these two adults as readers from these two different ways of viewing the reading process?*
- **After 15 minutes, bring the whole group together.** Ask people to list the kinds of information they gained about the adult reader by looking at reading from a skills-based model of reading and from a sociocultural model of reading. Record their responses on newsprint.


Information about Adult Readers	
<u>Richard – Skills-based</u>	<u>Ann – Sociocultural</u>

- **Facilitate a discussion** of the whole group by asking participants to consider such questions as:
 - ? *What is your reaction to these different ways of understanding adults as readers?*
 - ? *What might an understanding of readers mean for the way you teach reading?*

4. LOOKING AT LITERACY PRACTICES AND CONTEXTUALIZED


INSTRUCTION

(50 MINUTES)

-  **Discussing the reading:** Explain to participants that this activity focuses on increasing adult students' reading skills as an outcome of literacy instruction. However, there is another outcome of instruction—increases and improvements in how much and how often adults read in their daily lives. The next research study focuses on the type of instruction that affects adult students' reading practices. Refer participants to the article **Taking Literacy Skills Home**, which they read before this session.
- As a pre-reading activity, **post the newsprint Research on Contextualized Instruction and ask participants to read the questions before they read the handouts you are about to give them.** (Remind them that this is standard practice to help students improve their comprehension.)

Research on Contextualized Instruction

- Is increasing the literacy practices of adult students a goal of yours, your students, or your program?
- If so, what might this research mean for the instruction you provide?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of contextualized instruction and using authentic materials?

-  **Distribute the handout *Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction*.** Ask participants to spend five minutes to silently and individually read through the handouts.
- **Facilitate a 20-minute discussion of this research with the whole group,** using the questions on the newsprint as a guide.

- **Pass around several samples of *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom*, and ask participants in pairs to leaf through the guide, using the Road Map on the handout to help them understand what’s in the guide. Make sure that participants know where they can download or get a copy of the guide, if they want one. Ask participants if they have any comments about the guide.**

5. EVALUATION OF SESSION TWO AND ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION THREE

(15 MINUTES)




Another Idea





Use the “Useful/How to Improve” technique from Day One to get quick feedback from the participants about what was useful and what could be improved about this session.

Either take notes yourself on a piece of paper or write their comments on newsprint for documentation.

- **Using the newsprint Session Two Agenda, ask participants for a thumbs up, down, or level to show their reaction to the activities.** Quickly total the responses on the newsprint: +, -, or N (neutral).

Ask for suggestions for improvements.

- **Explain to participants what the final series of research articles covers:** research about how to understand the reading profiles of adult students, as well as how to help adult students acquire an understanding of what the reading process and components are, plus some examples of specific instructional strategies for improving fluency, decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension.
-  **Distribute Readings Assigned for Session Three:**
 -  **Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Tell participants that they should read the entire article.
 -  **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Tell participants that they should read the entire article.

-  **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web site).** Explain that they should read the entire article, and ask participants, if they have a chance, to go to the Web site (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/) and check it out.
-  **Introduction to *Understanding What Reading is All About Teaching Materials*.** Explain that they should read the introduction and skim the outline.
-  **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding, Comprehension.** Explain that they should skim through all pages, then read those sections that relate to the instructional strategies they might be interested in using in their classes.
-  **Refer participants to the *Participants' To-Do Form* in the Pre-Meeting Packet.** To the best of your ability, make sure that participants are clear about what they are required to do before the next meeting.
- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next meeting.** If applicable, explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next meeting in the event of bad weather. Be sure that you have everyone's home and/or work telephone numbers so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Two	
1. Welcome, Session Two Objectives, and Agenda	<i>10 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post newspapers; review. 	
2. Using the Components of Reading Instruction to Teach Beginning- and Intermediate-Level Readers	<i>60 mins., SMALL GROUP then WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form two groups according to level; post newspaper for groups to discuss (40 minutes in groups). • Regroup; representative from each small group shares responses. • Whole group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? <i>How are these two approaches (Hager's for low-level readers, EFF for intermediate readers) similar and how do they differ?</i> ? <i>How might either approach be adapted for another reading level?</i> <p style="text-align: center;">15-Minute Break</p>	
3. Understanding Adults as Readers	<i>60 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss readings Lessons from Preventing Reading Difficulties... and Literacy for Life.... Form two random groups. • In groups, review readings; then 15 minutes in groups to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? <i>What can you learn about these two adults as readers from these two different ways of reviewing the reading process?</i> • Regroup; post newspaper <u>Information about Adult Readers</u>; list information about each reader. • Whole group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? <i>What is your reaction to these different ways of understanding adults as readers?</i> ? <i>What might an understanding of readers mean for the way you teach reading?</i> 	


Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session Two

4. Looking at Literacy Practices and Contextualized Instruction	<i>50 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to reading Taking Literacy Skills Home; post newsprint <u>Research on Contextualized Instruction</u>. • Distribute handout <i>Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction</i>; silent reading. • Whole group discussion, using newsprint questions. • Pass around sample of <i>Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom</i>. 	
5. Evaluation of Session Two and Assignment for Session Three	<i>15 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post newsprint Session Two Agenda; ask for thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs level about each activity; ask for ideas for improvement. • Hand out readings assigned for Session Three. • Remind participants of the session's date, time, and location. 	

Materials to Hand Out in Session Two


CONTENTS


Handouts for Session Two

Handout : *Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction*


Readings Assigned for Session Three

Reading : **Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS):
NCSALL Research Brief**

Reading : **The Relationship of the Component Skills
of Reading to Performance on the
International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS):
NCSALL Research Brief**

Reading : **Assessment Strategies and Reading
Profiles (introduction to the ARCS Web
site)**

Reading : **Introduction to *Understanding What
Reading is All About* Teaching Materials**

Reading : **Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit:
Fluency, Vocabulary, Decoding,
Comprehension**

Literacy Practices and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

RESEARCH ON CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

What is “Contextualized Instruction”?

Contextualized instruction involves using authentic, real-life texts and materials for real-life purposes within classroom instruction (rather than “school-only” texts and materials such as workbooks or practice tests). Authentic texts and materials match the literacy practices of the particular students within that class (not just students in general). They are not just functional and not just real; rather, they parallel the actual literacy practices of those students in the world outside of formal schooling

1. First Study: *Literacy Practices of Adult Learners (LPAL) Study**

Findings of the LPAL Study.

- Students who participate in classes in which real-life literacy activities and texts are used increase:
 - ⇒ the frequency with which they read and write in their daily lives
 - ⇒ the variety of texts they read and write outside of school
- How much students and teachers share decision-making for all aspects of their program was not related to literacy practice change.

Research Question. What are the relationships among the degree to which adult literacy classes use real-life literacy activities and materials (contextualized instruction), the degree to which students and teachers share decision making, and changes in students’ out-of-school literacy practices?

Study Methodology. Collected data on out-of-school literacy practices from 173 adult students, at a range of levels, attending 83 different classes (ABE, GED, family literacy and ESOL) across the U.S.

* Conducted through the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) by Victoria Purcell-Gates, Sophie Degener, Erik Jacobson, and Marta Soler at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Reports and articles available online at www.ncsall.net.

Data Collected.

- Observed classes and surveyed teachers and programs about the role of students in decision making in the classes, and about how frequently real-life activities and texts were used in classes
- Visited and interviewed learners in their homes at beginning and at end of participation in literacy class
- Used structured questionnaire to ask learners about 50 different literacy practices, such as reading newspapers, reading mail, writing letters, and reading to children

Implications of the LPAL Study. If teachers want students to increase and expand real-life literacy practices (not just do better on tests or workbooks), they should use contextualized instruction (real-life literacy activities and texts) in their classes. This could also have an impact on children's schooling since:

- Children learn more about the "conceptual basis of reading and writing" when they grow up in homes where adults read and write more
- Children who begin school with higher levels of literacy knowledge and familiarity are more successful at learning to read and write

2. **Second Study: National "What Works" Evaluation for Adult ESL Students***

Findings of the "What Works" ESL Study. Growth in basic reading skills (Woodcock-Johnson Basic Reading Skills Cluster) was stronger when teachers made connections to the "outside" or real world and used authentic materials.

Research Question. What are effective instructional approaches and methods for teaching adult ESL learners with limited literacy skills?

Study Methodology. This study was a comparative study of adult ESL learners and teaching practices in 38 classes from 13 programs in seven states (Arizona, California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Texas and Washington).

* Conducted through American Institutes for Research and Aguirre International (report not yet published), funded by U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

Data Collected.

- Collected data from 495 ESL students upon entry to the program, then three and nine months after enrollment. Measured students' English language and literacy development using standardized and non-standardized tests.
- Also collected extensive data on teaching through multiple classroom observations. Looked at instructional strategies such as "varied practice and interaction", "open communication", and "connection to the 'outside'".

Implications of the "What Works" ESL Study. Use of contextualized instruction is one, effective approach for improving the reading skills of adult ESL students with limited literacy skills.

Distinction Between Functional Skills, Real Materials, and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Life skills that are needed by adults in general, and assumed to be needed by most ABE and ESOL students

Examples:

- Textbooks with exercises that show how to fill out checks
- Worksheets with dialogues for talking to child's teacher

TEACHING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IS NOT AUTHENTIC AND CONTEXTUALIZED IF:

- Teachers or curriculum automatically assume students need these skills, but in fact they are not the actual literacy or language skills needed by the particular students in your class
- Teachers do not use the real-text examples students bring in from their daily lives

REAL MATERIALS

Real literacy texts or objects that adults encounter in their daily lives

Examples:

- Checkbooks
- Letters from teachers at children's school

TEACHING USING REAL MATERIALS IS NOT AUTHENTIC OR CONTEXTUALIZED IF:

- Teachers or curriculum automatically assume that these are the materials that students need or want to learn to master, or they are not the actual literacy or language texts encountered by the particular students in the class

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS, CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Print materials used in ways that they would be used in the lives of learners outside their adult education classes*. Materials and instruction aimed directly at the skills and knowledge adults need to perform tasks they have identified as meaningful to them "right now" in their everyday lives**

Examples:

- Practice filling out the actual school registration form brought in by an adult student after she identified it as a need
- Practice writing checks after student expresses desire to open checking account

Functional context and real materials are *only* authentic and contextualized *if* students in your class have identified specific content and skills as a goal or need and identified those materials as the real-life texts or objects they want to master.

* From Jacobson, et al (2003) *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Available at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf

** From Gillespie (2002). *EFF research principle: A contextualized approach to curriculum and instruction*. Available at <http://eff.cls.utk.edu/PDF/03research-practice.pdf>

An Example of the Difference Between Functional Skills, Real Materials, and Authentic/Contextualized Instruction

An adult education teacher, Robert, who teaches beginning- and intermediate-level English to Speakers of Other Languages learners in an urban program, uses a standard life skills curriculum. The curriculum is presented in a textbook that includes chapters with lesson plans for learning oral language, reading and writing skills in functional content areas for adult newcomers to the U.S., including health skills (making appointments with doctors and dentists, calling the emergency number, reading labels on bottles), shopping (reading labels, asking questions in grocery stores), banking (opening checking and savings accounts), getting around (reading bus schedules), housing (reading rental agreements, negotiating repairs with landlords), etc. The curriculum includes worksheets for students to fill out to practice their reading and writing skills in these areas, including samples of real tasks, such as a page with multiple fake checks on it to fill out. Once, Robert even brought in the form his doctor asked him to fill out in the waiting room. **Robert is teaching functional skills, using some real materials.**

Each semester, Robert divides the curriculum into segments, covering one chapter per week of class. He tells the students, most of whom are recent Chinese immigrants, what will be covered each week. However, he finds that it sometimes takes more than one week to cover a chapter, so that some chapters are left undone at the end of the semester. One semester, at the beginning of his intermediate-level class, Robert decides to ask the students to prioritize the content areas according to what they feel they most need to learn, so that if they run out of time at the end of the semester, the students will be missing out on the topics that they prioritized as lowest.

He gives the students a list of the functional content areas covered in the curriculum, and asks them to discuss the areas with each other and reorder the content areas, highest priority first. At the end of the activity, Robert looks at their newly-ordered list, sees that there has been some shuffling of priorities, but is very surprised to see that “visiting the dentist” has been entirely left off the list of functional content areas. He asks the students why this is so. One student explains, in halting English, that all of the students in the class go to Chinese dentists; the dentists keep records in Chinese, and the students are happy with these dentists and have no desire to go to an English-speaking dentist, so they see no need to learn that vocabulary in English. Robert realizes that he has been

teaching the vocabulary and reading skills related to “visiting the dentist” for the past two years to Chinese students, without realizing that probably none of the students was interested in learning it.

So he decides to ask the students what topics they would like to add to the list of functional content areas. Immediately the students begin talking about attending parent-teacher conferences and all of the information that comes home from their children’s schools in English: field trip forms, descriptions of the statewide tests, announcements of meetings and presentations, results from standardized tests, etc. Since Robert does not have children, and the curriculum does not cover many of these skills, Robert asks them to bring in materials sent home by the school, and he offers to design a unit on the English needed for dealing with children’s schools and teachers. The students not only begin to bring in examples of school-generated texts, but they ask Robert to move the “dealing with school” unit close to the front of the semester, since it is a high priority for most of the students. Robert uses the texts students bring from home for reading and writing practice, and designs parent-teacher conference dialogues for the students to practice, using vocabulary from the materials sent home by the school. **For this unit, Robert is using authentic materials and providing contextualized instruction.**

ROAD MAP for Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners*

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT:

the Literacy Practices of Adult Learners research...

—————→ Go to the Introduction (pp. v – x)

the definition of authentic materials and activities...

—————→ Go to Chapter One (pp. 1 – 5)

the theories behind authentic materials...

—————→ Go to Chapter One (pp. 5 – 20)

how to learn about students' lives in order to know what materials and activities would be authentic...

—————→ Go to Chapter Two (pp. 27 – 41)

how to use authentic materials and activities in your class...

—————→ Go to Chapter Three (pp. 43 – 66) or Chapter Four (pp. 67 – 88)

how to assess student goals and progress...

—————→ Go to Chapter Five (pp. 89 – 104)

* Available at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf



Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief

Strucker, J. & Davidson, R. (2003, November). *Adult reading components study (ARCS)* (NCSALL Research Brief). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL.

NCSALL's Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS), conducted by John Strucker and Rosalind Davidson at Harvard Graduate School of Education, was designed to describe the various types or clusters of readers enrolled in US adult basic education (ABE) programs, including both native speakers and those in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. The goal of the study was to help practitioners and policymakers understand who adult learners are as readers and how to gear instruction to their specific reading needs.

Nine hundred and fifty-five randomly-selected learners (676 ABE and 279 ESOL) were interviewed and assessed at learning centers in Texas, Tennessee, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. They were given a battery of reading and language assessments to determine their instructional needs. Over half of this testing was done by local ABE and ESOL practitioners who were trained to administer the battery and conduct the interviews in a uniform manner. Each of the students in the study was tested in phonological awareness, rapid naming, word recognition, oral reading, spelling, vocabulary, and background knowledge. Researchers also interviewed students about their educational history and reading habits.

In this research brief, we present some preliminary findings from the ARCS. These findings and implications for practice related to the findings, are presented in two sections: 1. Native English Speakers' (ABE) Clusters, and 2. Native Spanish Speakers' (ESOL) Clusters. Then we refer readers to additional resources based on the ARCS.

NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' (ABE) CLUSTERS

For the 676 students in ABE classes, 51 percent had repeated at least one grade, and 22 percent reported having trouble with reading in grades K-3. Of those who grew up in the U.S., 53 percent reported getting either Chapter 1 (reading support) and/or Special Education help in K-12.

The mean word recognition score for these students was a 6.62 grade equivalent (GE). Their mean oral reading mastery level was GE

7.9, and their mean receptive vocabulary score was equivalent to a GE 6.5. On a test of background knowledge, the mean for the group was below average range for the test, and the mean score on a word analysis test (Woodcock-Reading Mastery Word Attack) placed this group of students in the 26th percentile.

From the 676 adult basic education students assessed in this study, the researchers identified 10 “clusters” (students with similar reading profiles) in three groups. The table below details the three common groups and the clusters within each group for the 676 ABE students in this study.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF ABE STUDENTS IN THE TEN CLUSTERS IN THREE COMMON GROUPS OF READING SKILL LEVELS

Groups and Clusters of Reading Skill Levels	Percentage of Students in ABE Sample
<i>Group 1: GED / Pre-GED</i>	34%
Cluster 1: Strong GED	9%
Cluster 2: Pre-GED with Vocabulary/Background Information needs	11%
Cluster 3: Pre-GED with Vocabulary/Spelling/Rate (fluency) needs	14%
<i>Group 2: Intermediate Students</i>	56%
Cluster 4: High Intermediates with Difficulties in Print Skills/Rate	9%
Cluster 5: Intermediates with Stronger Print than Meaning Skills	17%
Cluster 6: Intermediates with Low Reading Rate	5%
Cluster 7: Low Intermediates	16%
Cluster 8: Low Intermediates/Should-be-in-ESOL	9%
<i>Group 3: Lower Level/Beginning Students</i>	11%
Cluster 9: Beginners	8%
Cluster 10: Reading/Rate Impaired	3%

In general, many adult basic education students below the GED level have reading skills similar to those of children at risk for reading difficulty. Phonemic awareness problems that existed in childhood persisted into adulthood. Their reading comprehension and reading rate (fluency) seem to have stalled at middle school levels. Perhaps this is because, although they got extra help with reading in the primary grades

from Chapter 1 or special education teachers, they got no such help in middle or high school. Because their reading was stalled at middle school levels, their background knowledge and vocabulary also top off at that level.

Some of the specific findings about this group, and the implications for practice related to each finding, are listed below:

GED-level and low-level/beginning readers have different reading profiles from intermediate readers.

Implication: GED group needs help in passing the test and building skills (in preparation for post-secondary education). Low level/beginning students, because of poor phonemic awareness and word recognition skills, need direct, systematic, sequential instruction in these skills.

In the intermediate group, who comprise the largest percentage of adult students, students appear to have learned some word attack skills; they know basic phonics, but don't make strong use of those skills.

Implication: The primary needs for intermediates are increasing fluency and developing a more literate (above grade equivalent 4-5) vocabulary and background knowledge. Without middle school background knowledge in history, geography, science, and math, these students have an inadequate preparation for the GED or for post-secondary education. For the intermediate group of adult students, practitioners should focus on increasing students' reading fluency (using oral reading) and on acquiring background knowledge and vocabulary.

The researchers also advocate for further research aimed at identifying strategies for teaching vocabulary so that students can achieve accelerated growth in reading.

NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS' (ESOL) CLUSTERS (ANALYZING SPANISH SPEAKERS ENGLISH READING SKILLS)

Of the 279 ESOL students tested in the ARCS, 78% were native speakers of Spanish. They were interviewed in Spanish and given both English and Spanish reading components tests. The interview included questions on the learner's childhood educational history; Spanish reading problems, if any; parents' levels of education/years living in the US; time spent studying English; home and work literacy practices and spoken language use in Spanish and English; educational goals; and health.

The researchers used the data from four English tests and five Spanish tests to create clusters of similar learners. While the size of the

sample used in this analysis means that these findings shouldn't be generalized across all Spanish speakers, they can be suggestive. Key findings from this analysis and related implications include:

Contrary to what many ESOL teachers told the ARCS researchers to expect, more than 80% of the native Spanish speakers had adequate or better native language literacy skills.

Implication: For many of these students who have adequate-to-strong native language literacy skills, an “English-as-a-Foreign-Language” (EFL) approach might produce faster growth than traditional survival/conversational ESL approaches. These students should be given the opportunity to apply their literacy and school-based skills to the task of learning English. This might mean more formal EFL courses that teach grammar and vocabulary sequentially, using basic EFL texts as well as materials taken from a real-world context. For these already literate adults, reading and writing English may actually facilitate the acquisition of oral-aural skills in English.

Unlike the ABE students discussed previously, ESOL Spanish speakers' reading ability in Spanish was directly related to years of Spanish school completion: the more years completed, the stronger the skills. It is also possible that the years of school completion in Spanish is related to the speed of English skills acquisition.

Implication: Most of these students were did not have reading disabilities as children. As discussed above, students with strong skills in Spanish might benefit from a more formal EFL approach, as if they were normally developing high school students taking English as a foreign language.

All participants, regardless of level, were surprisingly weak on English consonant sounds.

Implication: Literacy programs often quickly gloss over English phonemes (letter sounds) in beginning ESOL classes because the learners who are already literate in Spanish seem able to chunk English words correctly into syllables immediately. This is because they transfer this chunking skill from Spanish. But it is important for all ESOL students to practice producing and perceiving English consonant sounds. English has a lot of medial and final consonant blends (-nt, -st,) that are difficult to perceive in the natural speech stream, but they are nevertheless important because they often carry vital syntactic and semantic information. In addition, because English vowels can be pronounced several different ways, formal attention to basic English phonics patterns

and rules is a valuable investment for their future pronunciation and spelling, even if learners seem to already know how to decode English.

The two clusters of Spanish speakers who have low levels of education in Spanish also have severe decoding problems and show other signs of reading disabilities. Despite an average of almost ten years in the US and almost three years of ESOL instruction, unlike students in the other clusters, their English skills remain at early beginning levels.

Implication: Initial instruction in English for these students might emphasize oral-aural conversational skills at first, then introduce English reading and writing later using a direct, structured, and sequential approach such as Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood, etc.



The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)*: NCSALL Research Brief

Strucker, J., Yamamoto, K., & Kirsch, I. (2005, May). *The relationship of the component skills of reading to performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)* (NCSALL Research Brief). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL.

This Research Brief highlights key findings from a study that is a subset of a larger study being conducted jointly by NCSALL's John Strucker and Kentaro Yamamoto and Irwin Kirsch of the Educational Testing Service (ETS). This study builds on the proposition that a reader's comprehension performance is largely determined by his or her abilities in two areas—print components and meaning components—and that learners' skills, and therefore instructional needs, vary depending upon their relative strengths and weaknesses in these component areas. Print components include decoding accuracy and fluency; meaning components include oral vocabulary skills.

The study also continues work done by Strucker and NCSALL's Rosalind Davidson to develop reading profiles of IALS Levels 1 and 2 adults that will be informative for teachers, administrators, and policymakers in the field of adult literacy.

GOALS

The study's first goal was to see if specific levels of proficiency—tipping points—in the aforementioned reading components might prefigure higher levels of reading comprehension. To explore this question, the researchers compared the reading component skills of students at Levels 1 and 2 of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) with those of Level 3 students. Level 3 is the IALS level associated with increased civic

* The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Tuijnman, A., 2000) has been administered in over 22 countries and in more than 15 languages. It is a test of real-world literacy skills, based closely on the U.S. National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) (Kirsch, I. et al. 1993). Like the NALS, the IALS has five levels: Roughly speaking, Level 1 ranges from people with very limited literacy up to those with approximately early middle school skills; Level 2 includes those with middle school to early high school skills, and Level 3 begins with those who have literacy skills comparable to solid high school graduates. Across all of the participating countries, IALS Level 3 attainment was associated with dramatic increases in civic participation, economic success, access to lifelong learning opportunities, and reading for pleasure. In addition, people in Level 3 and above also enjoy better overall health and even live longer.

participation, increased economic success and independence, and enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and personal literacy.

The second goal was to determine whether levels of proficiency in the key components of reading could be used to describe the strengths and needs in reading of Level 1 and Level 2 adults, and therefore be useful to teachers, administrators, and policymakers to guide assessment design and instructional decisions.

THE SAMPLE

The study sample was a convenience sample rather than a representative sample. It included 950 adult learners from five states who were enrolled in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Eighty-four adults who had completed high school or above were added as a household sample for comparison purposes, for a total of 1,034 participants. Beginning ESOL learners were not included in the study because we did not have the capability to interview them in their native languages. Otherwise, the sample was generally comparable to the nationally enrolled adult literacy population with respect to gender, age, and representation of major U.S. ethnic groups.

	U.S. DOE OVAE* Data	Level 1 Sample n = 1,034
Male/Female	46.8% / 53.2%	41% / 59%
Age Distribution		
16–24	40%	36.4%
25–44	44.5%	48.1%
45–59	11%	10.1%
60 and older	3.5%	5.3%
Ethnicity		
<i>American Indian or Alaska Native</i>	1.4%	5.4%
<i>Asian</i>	7%	3.9%
<i>Black or African-American</i>	20%	29.5%
<i>White</i>	30%	51.8%
<i>Hispanic</i>	40%	38.3%**

* U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

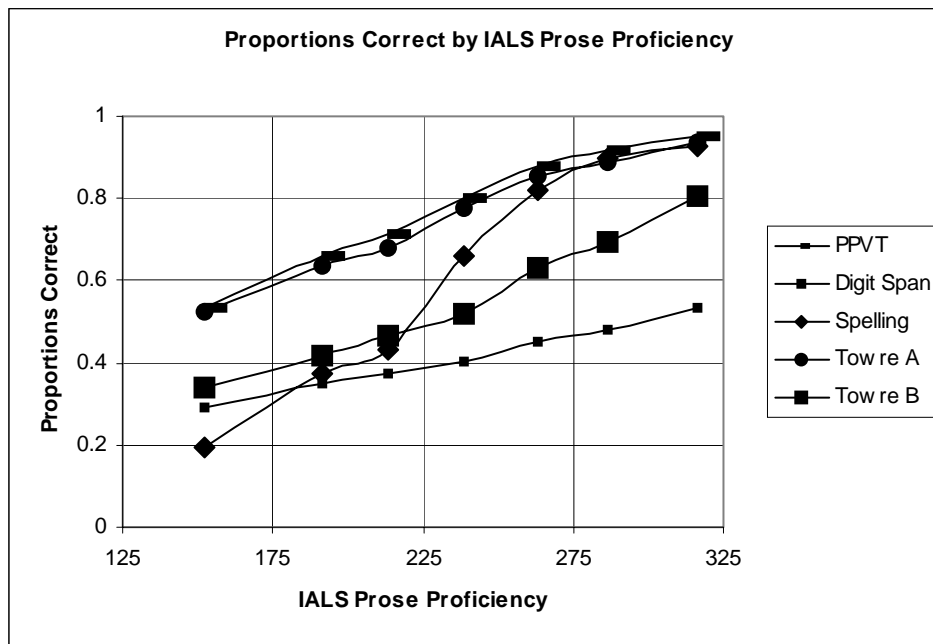
** Following U.S. Census Bureau procedures, Black, White, and Hispanic categories were not mutually exclusive for the Level 1 Sample, so the total exceeds 100%.

All participants were assessed in: 1) receptive (oral) vocabulary, 2) real-word reading for accuracy and speed, 3) pseudo-word reading for accuracy and speed, 4) spelling, 5) rapid naming of letters, and 6) short-

term working memory. They also completed prose and document literacy tasks from the IALS and a modified version of the IALS background questionnaire covering educational history, employment, reading habits, etc.

Receptive vocabulary	Shortened version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test created by K. Yamamoto (PPVT-Y) ¹
Real-word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-A) ²
Pseudo-word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-B) ²
Spelling	Adaptation of diagnostic spelling assessment published by Louisa Moats ³
Short-term working memory	Forward and backward Digit Span subtests from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III ⁴
Rapid naming of letters	Rapid Automatized Naming of Letters (RAN) and scrambled alphabet letters ⁵

THE FINDINGS – PART 1



¹ Dunn, L. & Dunn, L. (1997). *Peabody picture vocabulary test III (PPVT-III)*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

² Torgensen, J.K., Wagner, R.K., & Rashotte, C.A. (1999). *Test of word reading efficiency (TOWRE)*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.

³ Moats, L.C. (1995). *Spelling development, disability, and instruction*. Timonium, MD: York Press.

⁴ Wechsler, D. (1997). *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (WAIS-III) Digit Span*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation.

⁵ Wolf, M. (1991). Reading speed and naming: The contribution of the cognitive neurosciences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24.

Plotting the relationship of scores in the five key components (y-axis) against proficiency on the IALS prose literacy assessment (x-axis) revealed an interesting pattern. At the transition point between IALS Level 2 and IALS Level 3 (just below 275), readers score .75 to .85 proportion correct on the components of vocabulary, real-word reading, and spelling. This suggests that .75 to .85 proportion proficiency in those components may be the minimum level of skills needed to attain higher levels of performance in real world comprehension. In short, this research begins to answer an important question: “How proficient do ABE/ASE/ESOL readers have to be at vocabulary and word recognition in order to read at high school levels and above?”

The data also showed that up to IALS 275 (Level 3), the non-native speakers of English read English pseudo-words *better* than the ABE and ASE learners. Many reading researchers consider difficulty with reading pseudo-words to be an indication of the core phonological deficit that is at the root of most reading disabilities. Participants’ responses on the background questionnaire confirmed this: ABE/ASE native English speakers reported a very high incidence of childhood reading difficulties, while non-native speakers of English reported a very low incidence of childhood reading problems.

THE FINDINGS – PART 2

We performed latent class analysis of the test data to explore whether proficiencies in vocabulary (PPVT-Y), word recognition (TOWRE A), pseudo-word reading (TOWRE-B), Spelling, and short-term memory (WAIS digit span) could be used to describe patterns of reading strengths and needs among adult literacy students. That analysis yielded five patterns or classes of adult readers whose characteristics are summarized in the table below.

Class	% of Total Sample (n=1034)	% Native English Speakers	% Non-Native English Speakers	IALS Prose Literacy Levels %		
				Level 1	Level 2	Level 3+
1	48 (n=493)	86	14	5 (n=24)	49 (n=242)	46 (n=227)
2	17 (n=175)	72	28	26 (n=45)	61 (n=107)	13 (n=23)
3	15 (n=154)	5	95	32 (n=50)	62 (n=95)	6 (n=9)
4	12 (n=123)	<1	99	68 (n=83)	29 (n=36)	3 (4)
5	9 (n=89)	31	69	83 (n=74)	16 (n=14)	1 (n=1)

* Class 1, making up 48% of the sample, had the highest range of IALS skills, with 46% in Level 3 or above, 49% in Level 2, and only 5% in Level 1. Native speakers of English predominated, making up 86% of the class. This group was also the youngest overall.

* Class 2 had weaker IALS skills with only 13% scoring at IALS Level 3 or above, 61% in Level 2, and 26% in Level 1. The non-native English speakers in the group had good English skills and were predominantly enrolled in ABE or ASE rather than in ESOL classes. The native English speakers in Class 2 had weak print skills and some signs of reading disability.

* Class 3 is comprised of 95% non-native speakers of English, of whom 75% are enrolled in ESOL classes. Their raw decoding ability (of pseudo-words) is nearly equal to that of participants in Class 1, but their vocabulary is much weaker. Sixty-two percent are in IALS Level 2, and 32% are Level 1.

* Class 4 are 99% non-native speakers of English, of whom 92% were enrolled in ESOL classes. Primarily because of their weak English vocabulary, 68% of Class 4 are in IALS Level 1 and only 29% are in Level 2.

* Class 5 is made up of 69% non-native and 31% native speakers of English. Among the latter group, many show signs of reading disability and report severe reading difficulties in childhood. Eighty-three percent of the people in Class 5 are in IALS Level 1 and only 16%% are in Level 2.

IMPLICATIONS

Patterns of strengths and needs in reading vary quite a bit among adult readers. Quick, easy-to-administer and easy-to-score tests of key reading skills, such as those used in this study, can give a useful picture of learners' strengths and needs. Assessing learners in these component skills is the necessary first step in planning efficient, focused instruction.

For adults in IALS Levels 1 and 2, governments should consider assessing not just IALS reading comprehension, but the key teachable components of comprehension—word recognition and vocabulary that ultimately drive comprehension ability.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Finding

It is possible to identify how proficient adults need to be in word recognition and vocabulary to achieve Level 3 performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)—the level associated with greatly enhanced life opportunities in many domains.

Related Recommendation

Learners whose vocabulary and word recognition are nearing those of people in Level 3 and above might be candidates for intensive, tightly focused, direct instruction in the vocabulary encountered in written language and in rapid, accurate word recognition.

Key Finding

The IALS is an un-timed literacy assessment containing real-world items embedded in a functional context. This has led some to argue that IALS performance is primarily a function of adults' life experiences and their familiarity with the socio-cultural content of the items. In sharp contrast, this research suggests that well-known basic reading skills like word recognition and vocabulary play critical roles in real-life literacy performances, much as they do in more traditional academic, school-based literacy assessments. The good news about these basic skills is that, unlike life experience and cultural context, word recognition and vocabulary are readily teachable by ABE practitioners.

Key Finding

Adult literacy students can be grouped into five distinct classes of readers:

Class 1: Proficient ABE, ASE, and Household Sample readers with very strong decoding and vocabulary skills

Class 2: ABE and ASE students with weaker decoding skills that tend to undermine their vocabulary skills

Class 3: Advanced ESOL students with strong decoding but noticeably weaker English vocabulary skills

Class 4: Intermediate ESOL students with moderate weaknesses in decoding and vocabulary skills in English.

Class 5: Low intermediate ESOL students and reading disabled ABE native speakers with marked needs in decoding and vocabulary.

Related Recommendation

The adult education system can begin to use these adult reader profiles to identify related instructional profiles as a step towards more focused and differentiated reading instruction for adult learners.

Short, easy-to-administer tests that give information about the learner's component reading skills will help identify the reader's profile and enable teachers to choose appropriate instructional approaches.

Key Finding

Simply knowing a readers' score on a reading comprehension test usually does not give teachers enough information to plan efficient instruction that is focused on the root causes of comprehension difficulties.



<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles>

Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles:

An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners

A Tool to Aid in Diagnosing Reading Difficulties

Whether to get a better job, attend community college or a trade school, or to enrich their lives in other ways, adults come to literacy classes to become better readers. Reading is not a single skill, it is a composite of several sub-skills any one of which can be weak enough to be the cause of a low level of reading comprehension.



A Resource for Learning About Reading Components and More...

In addition to the interactive Match a Profile, there is a Mini-Course on assessment and instruction of reading components, downloadable tests and word lists, references, and links to research. A section describes the methods, and findings of the ARCS project, the research on which this website is based.

Learners usually receive a silent reading comprehension test such as the TABE, ABLE or similar assessment when they first enroll. While such an assessment is necessary for an approximate class placement, it tells a teacher little about the learner's instructional needs; the instructor needs to know the learner's abilities on each of the major sub-skills of mature reading comprehension.

An Interactive Resource

Users enter a learner's grade equivalent reading scores on a few critical skills - word recognition, spelling, word meaning, oral reading rate, and on silent reading comprehension. Input of the learner's scores (reading profile) is then matched to one of the several distinctive reading profile groups we derived from the Adult Reading Component Study (ARCS). Information is given that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of learners with this reading profile.

The Website is for....

All ABE Teachers

Although the site has most relevance for teachers of basic reading, all ABE teachers are involved in the reading education of their learners.

Administrators of Literacy Centers

Administrators will learn more about reading development and the advantage of an extended initial assessment of enrollees in order to group learners who have similar instructional needs.

Adult Education Curriculum Resource Personnel

Knowing more about reading development will help resource personnel evaluate materials and methods for teachers and literacy centers.



<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles>

This interactive website has two tracks:

From the homepage, you can select either "Match a Profile" or "The Mini-Course" (you can switch between tracks at any time.)

► Match a Profile

Introduction to Reading Profiles and Reading Components

Not sure what reading profiles and components are? This page explains them.

Introduction to Match a Profile

What test scores will you need to match a research-based profiles? This page tells you.

Match a Profile

Ready to match a profile? This page contains the data form you will use to input your learners' scores. Once you click "Perform Analysis," you will go to the description of the research-based profile you matched.

Browse All Profiles

Interested in viewing any of the other research-based profiles featured on this site? From this page, you can browse through the descriptions of all 11 profiles as well as comparisons of profiles that are in the same Silent Reading Comprehension group.

How Did We Create the Profiles?

Would you like to know how we created the research-based profiles? This page tells you.

The Word Meaning Test (WMT)

Would you like a free word meaning test to use in your program? From this page, you can view and download one we have developed.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the NIFL website. The header includes the NIFL logo and the title 'ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND READING PROFILES'. Below the header, there is a search bar and a welcome message: 'WELCOME TO THE INTERACTIVE WEBSITE FOR ADULT EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS'. The main content area is titled 'ARCS - The Adult Reading Components Study at NCSALL' and describes the study's purpose. It then lists 'Two Website Tracks: Match a Profile' and 'Take the Mini-Course'. The 'Match a Profile' track is highlighted, and a 'Click to Go to Match a Profile' button is visible. A small line graph titled 'Reading Profile' shows scores for various components. At the bottom, there are links for 'Terms and Conditions' and 'Privacy Policy', and a disclaimer about NCSALL's involvement.

<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles>

► The Mini-Course



Introduction

to the

Mini-Course

What sections

make up the

Mini-Course?

This page tells

you what you

will find.

Reading Components

What are reading components? These pages introduce the two groups of components.

Print Skills (Alphabetic): Phonemics, Word Recognition, Sight Words, Word Analysis, Spelling, and Rate & Fluency

Need more information on Print Skills (Alphabetic)? These pages provide extensive information.

Meaning Skills Background Knowledge, Word Meaning (Vocabulary), and Silent Reading Comprehension

Need more information on Meaning Skills? These pages provide extensive information.

Assessment Drives Instruction

How is assessment related to instruction? Why is testing silent reading alone not enough? Would you like to view descriptions of the eleven research-based profiles featured on this site? These pages explore assessment and the profile descriptions.

Using a Questionnaire

Would you like to use a learner questionnaire in your program? This page lets you view and download the questionnaire used in the ARCS.

Using Assessments

Which assessments are used around the country? What kinds of assessments can you use with your learners? This section tells you.

References

Interested in the research? Find citations here.

Resources

Would you like to download word lists, the Word Meaning Test, or an informal Word Analysis Inventory? Interested in finding the web addresses of other adult education sites? This page can help.



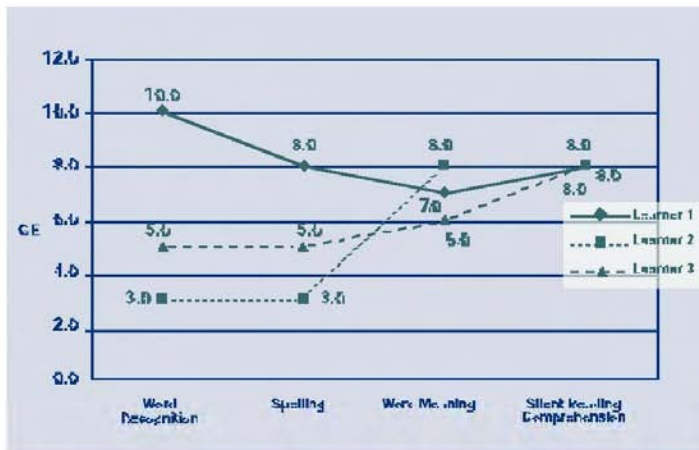
QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONTACT US....

E-mail: ncsall@gse.harvard.edu

Call: (617) 495-4843

<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles>

Three Learners from a High Intermediate Class



Time taken for diagnostic reading assessments can pay off in focused lessons that give learners the best opportunity to become better readers in the shortest amount of time.

The graph is of ABE learners from the ARCS data set. It shows grade equivalent levels (GE) on four reading components for three learners. If these learners were entering ABE classes, an entrance test would show all three learners reading silently with comprehension at GE 8.

Therefore, all three would be placed in the same high intermediate literacy class. However, the readers have distinctive arrays of abilities that require different focuses of instruction.

Learner 1 is a non-native speaker of English, literate in his first language and progressing well toward his goal of a community college education. He needs more word meanings (vocabulary) and background knowledge in order to raise his silent reading comprehension.

Learner 2, a native English speaker, has a typical dyslexic's profile, and although she has partially compensated for her deficiencies by using her vocabulary to support word recognition in context, she needs a systematic program of word analysis to raise her independent reading level.

Learner 3, also a native English speaker, shows a significant difference between his print skills and his reading comprehension level. His difficulties are not as severe as those of Learner 2 but they do give evidence of a moderate early reading problem. He is not a candidate for a one-on-one program, but he does need a word analysis assessment to see what sound-symbol pairings he has not mastered.

Time taken for diagnostic reading assessments can pay off in focused lessons that give learners the best opportunity to become better readers in the shortest amount of time.



Introduction to *Understanding What Reading Is All About* Teaching Materials

Understanding what reading is all about: Teaching materials and lessons for adult basic education learners. (2005). Cambridge, MA: NCSALL. Available at: www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/uwriaa.pdf

Overview – Lesson by Lesson

LESSON ONE: THE DEMANDS OF READING

Learners will review their own reading habits and strategies and will identify the kinds of reading they would like to improve.

LESSON TWO: GOALS FOR READING, PART 1

Learners will be able to explain the role reading plays in their lives, by identifying the kinds of text they need or want to read regularly. They will also explore the role they would like reading to have in their lives by investigating what reading means to experienced readers.

LESSON THREE: GOALS FOR READING, PART 2

Learners will continue to explore what, how, and why experienced readers read and apply this knowledge to their own reading process. Learners will set reading goals in their roles as family members, workers, individuals, and community members.

LESSON FOUR: THE COMPONENTS OF READING

Learners will understand that reading is a developmental process, with several components. Learners will develop an awareness of their own stage of reading development. Learners will be able to identify the skills they need to learn in order to become proficient readers.

LESSON FIVE: ANALYZING WORDS

Students will learn how to use (and practice) the following word analysis strategies: Wilson Reading System “tapping strategy” to divide words into individual sounds; “word family” approach for decoding; and base word and suffix identification. Learners will reflect on which strategies they find most useful.

LESSON SIX: READING WORDS BY SIGHT

Students will learn a “sky writing” strategy for reading phonetically irregular “sight words.”

LESSON SEVEN: READING WITH FLUENCY

Students will learn about the role reading fluency plays in proficient reading. Students will learn about the importance of reading often as a way to promote fluency. Students will learn how to use the Wilson “scooping” strategy to promote reading fluency.

LESSON EIGHT: DEVELOPING READING VOCABULARY

Students will understand the important role vocabulary plays in reading. Students will learn how to use the following strategies for learning new vocabulary: use context clues to “guess” the meaning of an unfamiliar word; use knowledge of known words; use knowledge of prefixes.

LESSON NINE: DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION

Students will understand the important role comprehension plays in reading. Students will learn how to use the following strategies for understanding what they read: a “previewing” strategy to establish a context for new information; a “post-reading questioning” process to assimilate new information; an “imaging” strategy to promote understanding.

LESSON TEN: DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL READING PROFILE

Learners will analyze their strengths and needs in each component of reading. Learners will become more aware of the specific skills they need to work on to become proficient readers.

LESSON ELEVEN: REVIEWING THE INDIVIDUAL READING PROFILE

By meeting individually with the teacher, learners develop and refine their understanding of their reading strengths and needs and generate a plan for reaching their reading goals.

LESSON TWELVE: UNDERSTANDING LEARNING DISABILITIES

Students will acquire a better understanding of what it means to have a learning disability. Students will learn that learning disabilities have no bearing on intelligence. Students will learn about how they can get tested for a learning disability. Students will discuss some strategies for learning and living with a learning disability.

LESSON THIRTEEN: IMPROVING YOUR SPELLING (OPTIONAL)

Students will understand the role spelling plays in reading. Students will learn strategies for spelling phonetically regular and phonetically irregular words.

Reading Assigned for Session Three
 Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Fluency



Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

- Idea 1** Assess fluency using formal or informal measures to determine the need for training.
- Idea 2** Provide fluency training with guided oral repeated reading of sounds, words, phrases, sentences, or passages at or just below the current reading level. The complexity of the material (single sounds vs. passages) depends on the reading level of the learner(s).
- Idea 3** Fluency training should be intense, but limited to 10-15 minutes a day over an extended period of time. The adult literacy research does not currently reflect best practice in minimum or maximum total number of hours of training.
- Idea 4** Fluency can be provided through accuracy/rate training or prosody/intonation training. ESL learners will likely benefit from both as their automatic decoding skills will improve with increased speed and comprehension skills will improve with feedback.

Fluency is a means to reading comprehension, not an end. Fluency is a prerequisite for gaining meaning from text. Instructors using fluency training enable readers to make a smooth transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. In fact, research indicates a strong correlation between fluency and reading comprehension; however, training a learner to be a fluent reader is not the same as teaching the learner to comprehend. The relationship between oral reading accuracy and reading comprehension is somewhat dependent on the types of errors made by learners in their oral reading. Errors that change the meaning of the text are more directly related to reading comprehension than errors that do not change the meaning. Additionally, training a learner to be a fluent reader is not teaching them to speed-read. In speed-reading, words are skipped and the reader skims or scans the text with the goal of getting the gist as quickly as possible. Fluency training should be approached in the same way we learn to play a musical instrument, master a piece of music, or build athletic skills. In other words, **practice makes perfect!**

Note: The strategy of using sustained silent reading to improve fluency is unsupported by research. Silent reading may be used to reinforce instruction and provide extra practice, but is not a reliable method for improving fluency.



FLUENCY TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The following activities are separated into rate and accuracy for beginning levels and prosody for intermediate/advanced levels. They include ideas for **modeling, providing, and varying** repeated reading for individuals or groups of adult learners.

Beginning Levels

Modeling Rate and Accuracy

The goal of modeling is to demonstrate appropriate rate and fluency as well as set up a positive and successful experience with oral reading.

Use a controlled text at or just below the current reading level of the individual or group. Low level learners may need to develop automaticity of single words (decodable and sight) before taking on text such as phrases, sentences, or passages. They may find text reading to be overwhelming at the beginning of fluency training (see variations).

Controlled text can be in the form of phrases, sentences, or passages. Begin by providing a brief summary of the new text and pre-teach new vocabulary words to facilitate comprehension. Read clearly, accurately, and at a reasonable pace so that learners may follow along. When using text, it is important to explain and model how good readers read groups of words instead of reading one word at a time. Occasionally make errors to show how good readers adjust for mistakes and makes corrections.



Providing Repeated Reading of Text

Step 1. Give learners a copy of the modeled text or a different text at the same level. This means learners can read the text with 90% accuracy, or only 1 in 10 words are difficult.

Step 2. Have learners orally practice the text several times until the desired WCPM is reached.

It may be that after 3-4 readings, learners will have made the greatest gain they will make for that particular passage; therefore, it is helpful to have multiple passages at the same level in case they get bored.

The “coach” (ideally the instructor or a tutor) stops the reading whenever a mistake is made and provides the opportunity for self-correction. If learners cannot self-correct, correction is provided.

Step 3. The coach completes one minute timings individually.

All deviations from the text are counted and marked: self-corrections, repetitions, omissions, insertions, substitutions, or mispronunciations.

These errors are subtracted from the total number of words read for the WCPM. For example, 102 words/minute – 8 errors = 94 WCPM. Record or graph the final WCPM data.

Step 4. The coach checks comprehension by asking 3-5 short questions.

Step 5. Once the predetermined accuracy and rate goal is accomplished, the coach moves learners to the next level of text.



Intermediate/Advanced Levels

Modeling Prosody

The goal of modeling is to demonstrate appropriate fluency and prosody as well as set up a positive and successful experience with oral reading.

The coach (ideally the instructor or tutor) begins with a brief summary of the new text and pre-teaches vocabulary words to facilitate comprehension. Then the coach reads the text aloud using syntactic and rhythmic cues in phrases and sentences.

It is important to read aloud a variety of materials and model different types of expression (suspense, humor, surprise, fear, etc.) based on the type of writing (poetry, speech, mystery, non-fiction, fairy tales, etc.).

Providing Repeated Reading

Step 1. Using the same text as modeled, have learners break the sentences from a passage into phrases by using slash marks between phrases or loops underneath phrases to indicate the chunking. Alert them to punctuation marks that signal pauses, emphasis, questioning, or strong feeling.

Step 2. Have learners orally reread the passage to each other or as a group and attempt to mirror the modeled phrasing, rhythm, and expression.

Step 3. After each reading, the coach should give learners feedback on how closely their reading matched the modeling.

Step 4. Continue with reading and feedback until prosody of the passage is accomplished.

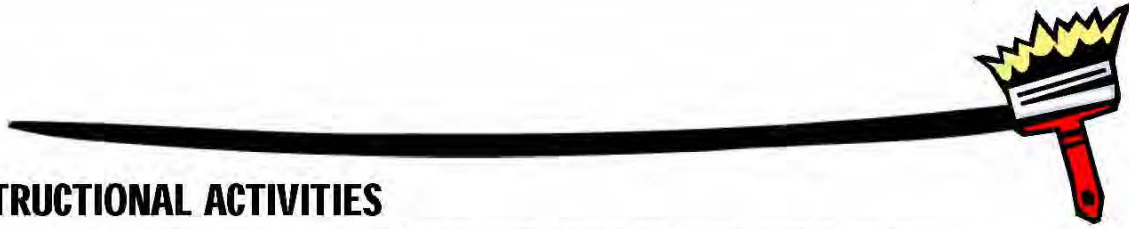
Step 5. Have the coach rate the learner's oral reading individually using the 1-4 system on the scale. Record the final data.

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Vocabulary



Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

- Idea 1** Select high frequency words for general language use or words specific to content material. Don't assume that a publishing company has chosen the best vocabulary words for your learners.
- Idea 2** Introduce new words by theme or category.
- Idea 3** Help learners develop personal connections to new words. All learners will be more successful in retaining words if they are of interest and relate to their daily lives.
- Idea 4** Teach independent strategies for learning new words. Provide explicit instruction in how to define important vocabulary words using context clues and dictionaries.
- Idea 5** Provide multiple exposures to words through discussion, word play, categorizing, mapping, word sorts, sentence writing, story writing, crossword puzzles, etc.
- Idea 6** Expose learners to a "word-rich" environment through varied listening, speaking, reading, writing, and computer-based activities.



INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

On the following pages are a variety of recommendations and instructional activities that parallel the key six ideas listed in the Research Findings section. Many of them are favorites of LDA instructional staff.

Select high frequency words for general language use or words specific to content material.

1. Take a few minutes each day for learners to share new words they encountered outside of class. Write the word, read the word, and discuss the meaning and use of the word.
2. Prioritize and pre-teach vocabulary words and meanings that are high frequency and/or appear in many settings or content areas.
3. Read through the text or publisher's vocabulary list and give priority to words that are most relevant and useful. Textbooks often have a list of 20-30 words at the beginning or end of a chapter. Sift through words and **select 10 or 12 words** for instruction.
4. Teach common metaphors, idioms, similes, and analogies. There are great resources on the Internet for explaining common figurative language used in American English. Post a metaphor, idiom, simile, or analogy of the week on the board. Teach learners that analogies are relationships between words and most analogies fit the following relationships:

Beginning Level

Part to whole
 Opposites
 Cause and Effect
 Action and Situation
 Person and Place

Intermediate Level

Relationships of degree
 Result
 Association
 Purpose
 Characteristic



Help learners develop personal connections to new words.

1. Swap difficult or unfamiliar words with easier words that are familiar in meaning. These can be written down next to the more difficult word. Have learners box the difficult word and highlight the easier word(s) so that their eye is drawn to the word they are learning and its easier meaning.
2. If a text provides no unfamiliar words, develop a list of synonyms for several words to build vocabulary and add variety to the passage.

Sample passage with target words highlighted:

Tony needed to **put** a box into his car. The box was **heavy**. He tried to lift the box. The next thing he knew, he could not move. He had **hurt** his back. It **hurt a lot**.

Target words:

put—
heavy—
hurt—
hurt a lot—

Near synonyms:

place, position, arrange
enormous, backbreaking, weighty
injure, thrown-out, wound
excruciating, severe, extreme

3. Have learners keep word journals or personal dictionaries. Word journals can be used to track encounters with new words, context clues, phrases, formal and informal uses for words, or images of the meaning of words.

Sample word journal entry:

Accumulated:

To gather, pile up

This word is more formal than pile-up. It can describe something that has piled up or it can refer to the act of things piling up.

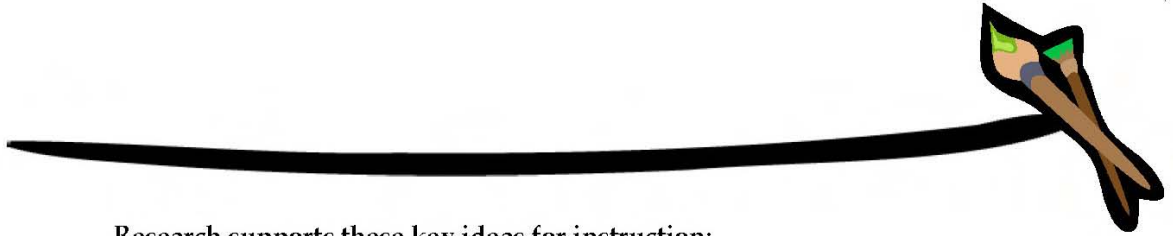
P. 26 Leaves accumulated at the foot of the tree. . .

P. 45 The leftovers accumulated in the refrigerator until there was no room. . .

(TV ad) Don't wait for the bills to pile-up (accumulate) pay them now.

(dentist) There is an accumulation of tartar on your teeth.

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Decoding



Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

- Idea 1** Provide flexible strategy instruction for the decoding of multi-syllable words.
- Idea 2** Provide extensive strategy practice in the decoding of multi-syllable words.
- Idea 3** Include instruction of word parts such as prefixes or suffixes and their meanings.
- Idea 4** *Always* apply the strategies to multi-syllable words from meaningful or authentic text.



INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in Research Findings, current research from secondary settings does not support the instruction of strict, complex syllabication rules, but rather emphasizes *flexibility* in instruction and decoding. Described below are four strategies for teaching adolescent or adult learners intermediate decoding skills. The best or preferred strategy is the decision of the instructor and learner.

Part-by-part Decoding Instruction

This strategy is focused on the idea that learners need to be taught to divide unknown, multi-syllable words into decodable parts or chunks based on their knowledge of familiar word patterns such as prefixes, suffixes, and base words.

In one variation of this strategy, affixes are introduced one by one and then applied to a corresponding list of multi-syllable words. Learners are taught to identify one or more familiar parts in the multi-syllable word, read the known parts first, and then figure out the whole word.

In another variation, learners are taught to break down unknown, multi-syllable words by looping or drawing loops underneath the decodable parts. This strategy could be applied to any content material the learner or a group of learners is working on. Unknown words from the text could be identified and then the instructor would model how to divide the words into decodable parts using prefixes, suffixes, and base words.

Pre-teaching the pronunciation of unknown words and vocabulary words will increase reading accuracy, fluency, and if repeated over time, will build independence in multi-syllabic decoding.

*(*See Chapter 3: Toolkit 3-I for a reference list of high frequency prefixes and suffixes.)*

*(*See Chapter 3: Toolkit 3-J, K for corresponding lists of prefixed and suffixed words for guided practice.)*



Syllable-type Instruction

This strategy is focused on teaching learners the different syllable types found within words. Learners are introduced to the six major syllable types found in the English language. They learn to read single-syllable words (*See Appendix 2*) and then apply that knowledge to multi-syllable words made up of combinations of those patterns. Extensive practice in multi-syllable words for reading and spelling is provided.

An easy way to remember the six types of syllables is the acronym CLOVER. They are presented on the following chart in suggested order of introduction, not the acronym order. The order of introduction corresponds with the beginning phonics sequence presented in Chapter Two.

Closed (C) - a syllable having a short vowel sound “closed” at the end by a consonant.

Examples: red, dish, scrap

Open (O) - a syllable with a single long vowel sound at the end.

Examples: go, she, try

Silent e (E) - a syllable with a long vowel sound ending with consonant-final e.

Examples: ate, hope, shine

R-controlled (R) - a syllable containing r-controlled vowels (ar, or, er, ir, ur, ear, our).

Examples: car, girl, purse

Consonant -le (L) - a final syllable containing a consonant-le (-ble, -ckle, -dle, -fle, -gle, -ple, -tle, -zle).

Examples: rifle, apple, turtle

Vowel pair or double vowel (V) - a syllable with a vowel combination (ai, ay, aw, oa, oo, oi, ou, ow, ee, ea, ie, ei, ue).

Examples: coat, feet, oil

Selections from the Adult Reading Toolkit: Comprehension



Research supports these key ideas for instruction:

- Idea 1** Provide explicit instruction and coaching of comprehension strategies using meaningful, authentic, and considerate text.
- Idea 2** Spend time developing vocabulary and prior knowledge. It is better to dive deep into a single topic than to lightly cover multiple topics.
- Idea 3** *Always* teach learners why the strategy is important, when, and how to use it with meaningful or authentic text.
- Idea 4** Teach learners to identify comprehension breakdowns and how to fix them by asking and answering self-generated questions.
- Idea 5** Show learners how strategies build upon each other and should be used flexibly given the type of material being read and the purpose for reading.



INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Beginning Levels

Finding What You Know (before and during reading)

The reader activates prior knowledge by reading titles and headings and thinking about what is already known about the topic. This strategy has been shown to have a significant effect on literal and inferential comprehension with poor readers. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it helps readers link new knowledge with prior knowledge and gives them a framework for understanding what they read. Poor readers do not spontaneously activate prior knowledge when they read.

Instructional Tips:

Impulsive or impatient readers will skip this strategy because they think it is busy work. Have them turn to a classmate and discuss what they know before allowing them to begin reading or read on.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Before reading, have learners look at the title and think about or discuss what the text may present.

Step 2. As the text is read, have learners think about or discuss personal experiences similar to what is presented in the text.

Think-a-loud:

"Before I start reading, I look at the title and think about what the book or text will be about and what I will learn from it. Sometimes I even skim through the book looking at chapter titles, pictures or graphics and think about what they are showing. While I am reading, I think to myself, 'How does this match with my own experience(s)?' Sometimes what I read does not match with what I know. When this happens, I slow down, reread, and ask myself questions."



Setting a Purpose (before and during reading)

The reader guesses or predicts what information will be presented, what will happen next, or what will be learned from reading. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it helps readers understand they need to be active participants in comprehending what the author is trying to say. Readers with learning disabilities or who are struggling with comprehension typically do not make predictions, set a purpose for reading, or have a goal for reading. They are less mindful of breakdowns in comprehension because they are not actively working to understand the text. This strategy teaches readers to monitor their comprehension, create meaning, and develop their own interpretations of the text.

Instructional Tips:

Some readers may think this is busy work and takes too much time. Explicitly model this strategy and explain how it does make a difference in their comprehension.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Before reading, have learners look at the titles, subtitles, headings, or table of contents and think about or discuss what will be presented in the text. Learners can take titles or headings and turn them into 'Why' questions as they read. If necessary, have learners write down the why questions as part of a note-taking strategy. They should be able to answer the why questions before reading the next heading and text.

Step 2. As the text is read, have learners relate or discuss personal experiences to the topic or details in the texts (application of finding what I know). Continue to ask if the answer to the question has been discovered.

Think-a-loud:

"Before I start reading, I think about what I already know and what questions I hope to answer. When I am reading for fun, I don't take much time doing this. When I am reading for an assignment or to solve a problem, I start reading by turning the title into a 'Why' or 'So what is important about...?' question. This step is really important because it helps me focus on what I am reading. It also helps me know when I am reading, but not understanding, because I can't answer the question. While I am reading, I think to myself, 'How does this match with my own experience(s) or what I already know?' Sometimes what I read does not match what I know. When this happens, I slow down, reread, and ask myself questions. When I am reading to find an answer, I read to the end of the paragraph and ask myself if I have found the answer. Sometimes I may ask myself, 'So what does that have to do with the topic or what I am trying to find?' If I have been reading for a while and I forget what I was reading for, I stop and remind myself of my purpose. Then I reread the parts I just finished. I do this because I may have missed what I was looking for or not understood what I was reading."



Intermediate/Advanced Levels

Understanding Text Cues (before and during reading)

In many elementary textbooks, important information is presented in illustrations. In secondary level materials, important information is signaled by text cues such as font size, font color, font style, boldface, or italics. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it teaches readers to organize factual information in a way that makes the details more meaningful and easy to remember.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Teach learners that the format of text headings tells you about how important the information is and whether it is a topic or supporting detail.

Step 2. Teach learners that important vocabulary terms are often printed in bold or italics.

Step 3. Teach learners about transitional cues or connectors. Examples are: *before, after, during, therefore, etc.* These words or phrases connect ideas, tell when something happened, tell where something happened, add more information, explain cause and effect, and provide a summary or contrast. They can be listed by category on word walls or in handouts. Reinforce connector cues by having learners include them in their writing. (*See Chapter 6: Toolkit 6-T for a Connector Cue handout.)

Think-a-loud:

"When reading a textbook or informative article, there are cues authors use to tell us how the information is organized and what is important. Let's look at some sample chapters or articles. In two seconds, who can tell me what the chapter will be about? What does the font tell you about the whole chapter? Let's try a more challenging question. How does the author identify key vocabulary terms you need to know on this page? Remember the author only suggests these words. How else do authors identify key vocabulary words? Let's make a note in our word journals that we should look for these cues to tell us important vocabulary terms."



Asking Questions (during reading)

The reader poses questions while reading as a means of comprehension monitoring, making meaning, establishing a purpose, connecting with prior knowledge, filtering relevant from irrelevant information, and comparing new understanding with old. This strategy is most important when readers are being introduced to new content and vocabulary. The **benefit** of this strategy is that it requires readers to take a more active role in making meaning and when used appropriately, cues the reader as to when comprehension breaks down.

The most useful types of questions to teach are learner-generated. Learner-generated questions come from what learners hope to find as they read. These questions emerge from setting a purpose for reading and are continuously created during the act of reading. As learners progress to more challenging text, the questions generate answers that need to be written down for later study or review.

Instructional Steps:

Step 1. Explicitly teach learners to generate questions while they read. The questions should make predictions, clarify misunderstandings, and develop personal connections with text.

Example questions:

- What am I supposed to take away from or get out of this reading?
- What will I be responsible for knowing after I read this?
- How does this connect to what I learned before?
- What isn't clear about what I am reading?
- Is that a vocabulary word I need to know?
- What details does the author use to support his/her viewpoint?
- Is evidence supported by reliable resources?

Step 2. Explicitly teach learners there are many ways to ask the same question. Teach cue words that they should read for and perhaps underline as they read. (*See Chapter 6: Toolkit 6-U for a Question Category handout.)*

Think-a-loud:

"When I am reading, I am constantly asking myself questions about what I am reading. I do this to make sure I understand what I read. If I don't ask myself questions, I find that I can read an entire page and not have a clue about what I read."

