
Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles

Participant Handbook

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Workshop Description

Learn how to navigate the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles website and use the Match-an-ASRP-Profile feature to access reading profiles that you can use to assess students' reading strengths and weaknesses. Review the research and assessment tools; learn how to use the site and the profiles to plan reading instruction.

Objectives

This workshop is designed to increase your awareness, knowledge, and use of research-based practices for adult reading assessment and instruction.

After completing the workshop, you will be able to:

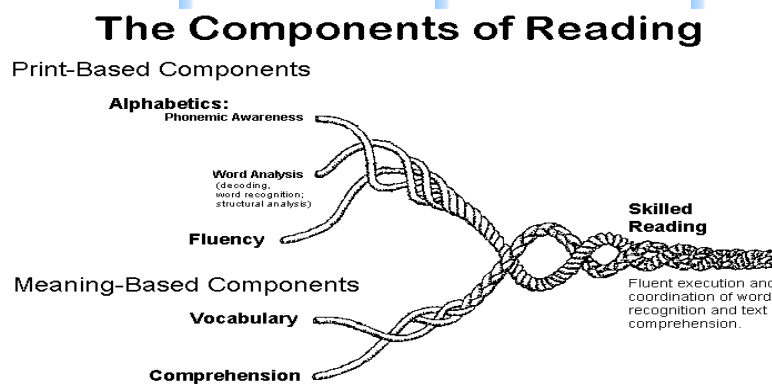
- Name the uses of reading profiles
- Explain the findings of the Adult Reading Components Study
- Use the *Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles* Web site to match as ASRP profile
- Use students' reading profiles to plan for group instruction

Agenda

Time	Topic
2:00 (20 min)	Overview
2:20 (15 min)	Reading Profiles and the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS)
2:35 (45 min)	<i>Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles</i> Web Site
3:20 (25 min)	Instructional Planning for Groups
3:45 (15 min)	Next Steps and Closing

What Is Reading

Major Components or Aspects of Reading Instruction



Alphabetic is the whole process of using the letters in an alphabet to represent spoken words. It includes an awareness that words are made up of basic sounds (phonemes), and knowledge of the relationship between these basic sounds and the letters used to represent them (word analysis or phonics). Students demonstrate their phonemic awareness with tasks that require the manipulation of basic sounds in words, removing sounds from words for example (cat becomes at when the first sound is removed), or adding sounds (at becomes cat). Phonics instruction teaches individual letter-sound correspondences (the sounds made by the letters b, t, and oa, for example), and how individual letter-sound combinations are blended together to form words, b-oa-t). Word analysis or decoding instruction includes phonics as well as other ways to recognize words. Sight word recognition, for example, is taught along with phonics. Common and irregularly spelled words (was, want, to) are taught so that they are recognized on sight as whole words rather than being analyzed into smaller parts and blended. Morphology, or the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compounding to form words, may also be taught as an aid to word recognition.

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

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

Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text. Comprehension is a *construction process* because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together to come up with what a text means. Readers interact with and become engaged in a text as ideas from the text are combined with their own prior knowledge or experience.

Motivation is the need and desire to learn to read. Motivation is especially important in adult literacy because in addition to an initial desire to learn to read, adults must set aside the time necessary to receive effective reading instruction, and overcome any embarrassment resulting from the stigma associated with seeking help for poor reading skills.

National Reading Panel. (2000a). *Report of the national reading panel: Teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Snow, C. E., Burns, S. M., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

National Institute for Literacy Publications and Resources

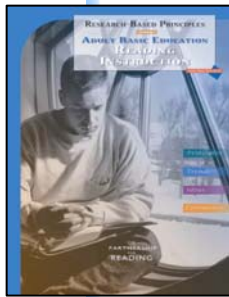
The National Institute for Literacy develops publications for families and educators of learners across the lifespan and disseminates them through its Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS). LINCS Regional Resource Centers, Resource Collections, and Discussion Lists provide information on a wide variety of literacy and relevant topics, issues, and resources. As national attention has increasingly focused on the quality of instruction and educational resources, LINCS products provide quality information that is based on scientifically based research.

A Summary of Scientifically Based Research Principles: Teaching Adults to Read

This booklet summarizes the emerging principles and trends in adult reading instruction identified in a report of the Reading Research Working Group: Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction. It presents the results of the Working Group's review of adult reading instruction research; it is not intended to offer extensive examples of how the research can be translated into practice.



Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction



This report presents results from an analysis of the adult basic education reading instruction research base providing the best information available about how adults learn to read. It focuses on principles that can be derived from the research and outlines a research agenda for the future of educational research.

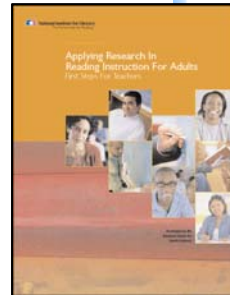
Learning to Achieve: A Review of the Research Literature on Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities

The six topics covered in the review—assessment, English language learners, teaching methods, accommodations, transition, and impact of LD—address needs and issues consistently raised by service providers working in the field.



Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers

This publication provides an introduction to research-based principles of reading instruction for instructors in adult education and literacy classes. It is intended as a first resource for those with little knowledge of reading instruction and is written with the needs of teachers in mind, those who



want to improve their ability to provide reading instruction for adults in family literacy and other basic education programs. This volume begins by building background knowledge of important concepts and principles and then suggests practical ways to apply research recommendations to the adult learning setting.

What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy

This publication helps address middle and high school classroom teachers', administrators', and parents' immediate need for basic information about how to build adolescents' reading and writing skills. This report summarizes some of the current literature on adolescent literacy research and practice, and suggests some methods of building adolescent reading and writing skills in the classroom.



QEd

QEd brings you ideas and information from the expanding scientific research base on how adults learn to read. The first issue tells the story of how researchers are using the high quality, scientific standards that adult literacy deserves and demands.

What is Scientifically Based Research? A Guide for Teachers

This brochure provides a brief introduction to understanding and using scientifically based research. Teachers can strengthen their instruction and protect their students' valuable time in school by scientifically evaluating claims about teaching methods and recognizing quality research when they see it.



Using Research and Reason in Education

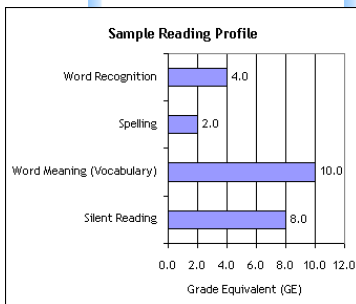


This publication provides guidance on how to recognize scientifically based instructional strategies, and how to use the concepts of research in the classroom. It offers a primer for those skills that will allow teachers to become independent evaluators

Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (Web site)

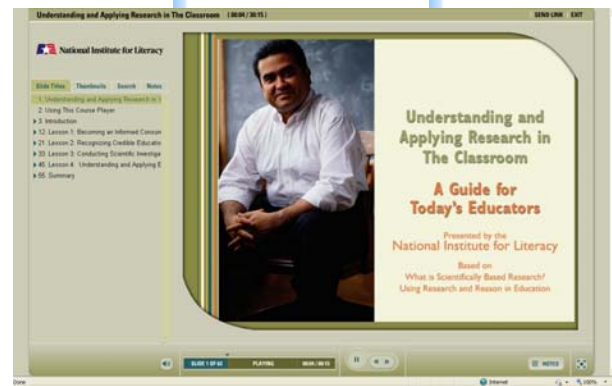
ASRP provides research-based assessment strategies to improve reading instruction for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) learners. Use the Web site to:

- learn about the components of reading
- learn about reading profiles and instruction
- watch videos of a teacher giving diagnostic reading tests to an adult learner
- download free tests with directions for administering and interpreting them
- match your adult learners' test scores to research-based adult reading profiles
- get instructional suggestions for teaching your learners based on their profile matches
- access additional resources and references on reading, assessment, and instruction



For more information visit: www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/

Understanding and Applying Research in the Classroom: A Guide for Today's Educators



This self-paced online course introduces users to information about scientific research and its relevance to educational decision making.

It is important for teachers to recognize credible information about instructional strategies in order to make informed decisions about which teaching methods to use in their classroom. This course will increase educators' awareness of education research methods and the characteristics of credible scientific research. It will help educators develop the ability to determine which research findings can be applied in their educational practice and are most likely to have a positive impact.

For more information visit www.nifl.gov/pd/applyingresearch.html

To download copies of the publications or to learn more about these materials, visit www.nifl.gov and click on **Publications**.

Reading Profiles

Activity: Sample Adult Education Student—Ed



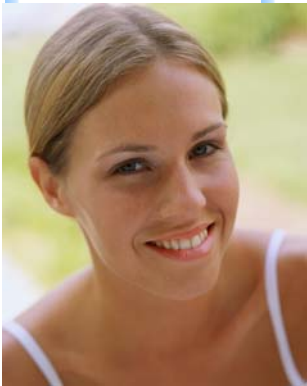
- 33 years old, single, born in Trinidad
- Second time in adult education program
- Low socioeconomic status (SES)
- Unemployed auto mechanic
- Wants a GED to get a good job
- Comprehension Score: Grade Equivalent (GE) 6

Directions: Use the slide to fill in Ed's profile scores.

	Ed
Reading Comprehension	6
Word Analysis	
Word Recognition	
Spelling	
Oral Reading	
Oral Vocabulary	

What might these additional scores suggest? What do you think Ed needs to work on? What do you see as his strengths? What do you see as his weaknesses?

Activity: Sample Adult Education Student—Ruth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 31-year-old native English speaker who was born and attended school through the 9th grade in Tennessee ■ Has a GED but poor reading and math skills ■ Diagnosed with a learning disability ■ Comprehension Score: GE 6
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Directions: Use the slide to fill in Ruth's profile scores.

	Ed	Ruth
Reading Comprehension	6	6
Word Analysis	2.6	
Word Recognition	5	
Spelling	1	
Oral Reading	5	
Oral Vocabulary	8	

What do these additional scores suggest? Do you think Ed and Ruth are about the same when it comes to reading? Why or why not? How do you think they differ?

Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS)

NCSALL Research Brief

by John Strucker and Rosalind Davidson

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 those enrolled in ABE classes and those enrolled in classes of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The goal of the study was to help practitioners and policymakers understand who adult learners are as readers in order to match 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, working memory, 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. ABE Clusters, and 2. Native Spanish Speakers' (ESOL) Clusters. Following that, we refer readers to additional resources based on the ARCS.

ABE Clusters

For the 676 students enrolled in ABE classes, 71 percent were native speakers of English, 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 receiving either Chapter 1 (reading support) and/or Special Education help in K–12.

The mean word recognition score for these students was a 6.6 grade equivalent (GE). Their mean oral reading mastery level was GE 7.9, and their mean receptive vocabulary score was equivalent to a GE 6.5. On a test of background knowledge, the mean for the group was below average range for the test, and the mean score on a word analysis test (Woodcock-Reading Mastery Word Attack) placed this group of students in the 26th percentile.

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

Table 1: Percentage of ABE Students in the Ten Clusters in Three Common Groups of Reading Skill Levels

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

In general, many adult basic education students below the GED level have reading skills similar to those of children at risk for reading difficulty. Phonemic awareness problems that existed in childhood persisted into adulthood. Their reading comprehension and reading rate (fluency) seem to have stalled at middle school levels. Perhaps this is because, although some received extra help with reading in the primary grades from Chapter 1 or special education teachers, few received 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 to help students achieve accelerated growth in reading.

Native Spanish Speakers (ESOL) Clusters (Analyzing Spanish Speakers English Reading Skills)

Of the 279 ESOL enrollees 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 those 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 ESOL 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 real-world contexts. For these already literate adults, increased emphasis on reading and writing English may actually facilitate their acquisition of English oral-aural skills.

- *Unlike the ABE enrollees discussed previously, ESOL Spanish speakers' reading ability in Spanish was directly related to years of Spanish school completion: the more years completed, the stronger their skills. It is also possible that their years of school completion in Spanish are 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. They also appear to be acquiring English at a slower rate. 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 using a direct, structured, and sequential approach such as Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood, etc.

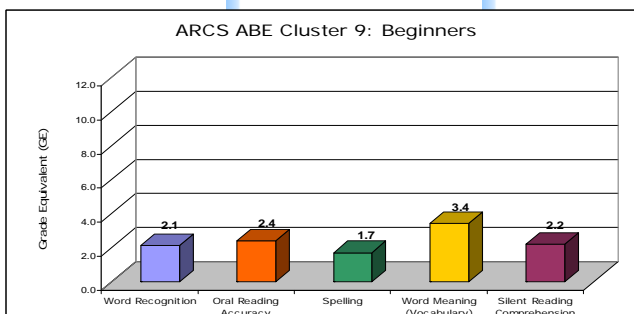
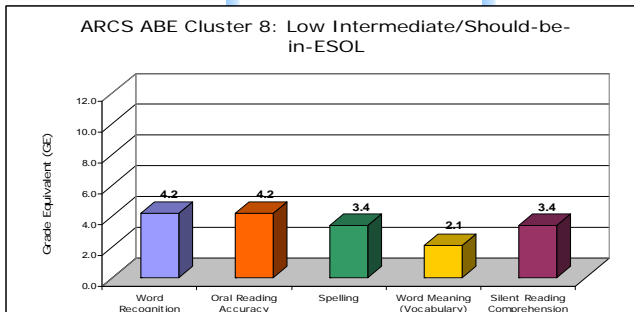
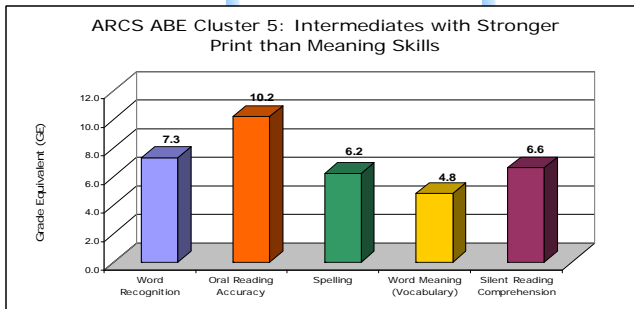
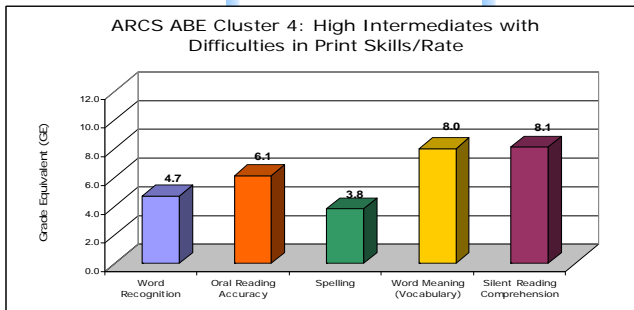
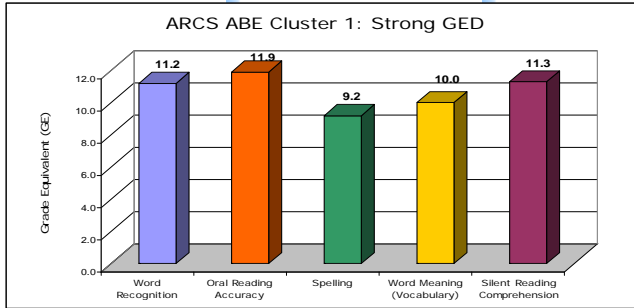
Interactive Web Site

The National Institute for Literacy has supported the construction of an interactive website that builds upon the work of the ARCS. The site provides both a mini-course on reading and an opportunity to match your learners' profiles with that of learner profiles developed using ARCS data. Once you have matched your learners' profiles, you can use the information presented to make instructional choices. The Web address is <http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/>.

To learn more about NCSALL's Adult Reading Components Study and other NCSALL research, and to download NCSALL publications, please visit our main website at: <http://ncsall.net>

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

ARCS Clusters



Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles

Web Site

Match an ASRP Profile

National Institute for Literacy

www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles

About the ASRP Profiles

- We limited the number of components we used to form the Comparison Profiles to those that a teacher would be able to test in a short time and that would give a good picture of a learner's instructional needs.
- Learners were clustered into 11 Profiles by their similarities on 5 components: word recognition, spelling, word meaning, comprehension, fluency as reading rate.
- To mirror practices in the field, we first grouped learners according to their scores on silent reading comprehension scores: 0–3.9, 4–5.9, 6–8.9, 9–12.
- Reading Profiles were then formed from each of the comprehension groups.
- The Reading Profiles serve the purpose of the Web site—to *bring research into the classroom*.

Activity: Match an ASRP Profile

Materials:

- Reading Profiles (pp. 5–6)

Perform the following activities as directed by the workshop leader.

Directions: In this activity you will Match an ASRP Profile using Ed's and Ruth's scores.

- Go to the *Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles* Web site at www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles.
- Choose Enter Learner's Scores in the left navigation bar.
- Scroll down the page to Match an ASRP Profile.
- Enter Ruth's scores from the chart on p. 6 of the handbook. Make sure to fill out all the fields.
- Read the information about Ruth's match with an ASRP Profile.
- Click on the Return to Analysis Page to Enter a New Set of Scores button in the Browse Profile: Menu at the bottom of the page.
- Enter Ed's scores from the chart on p. 5 of the handbook. Make sure to fill out all the fields.

- Read the information about Ed's match with an ASRP Profile.
- Browse the three profiles in their Intermediate Group by clicking on the Comparison of the Three Profiles in the Intermediate Group button and discuss the differences between Ruth in Profile 4 and Ed in Profile 5.
- Use your browser's back function to return to Ed's profile.
- Now go to the Suggestions for Instruction pages from the profile you've created for Ed. Click on Suggestions for Instruction for Profile 5 Learners in the menu at the bottom of the page.
- On the Suggestions for Instruction page, check out the Find more suggestions for instruction near the bottom.
- Then browse the Suggestions for Instruction pages for Profile 4 Learners, which is Ruth's profile. Note where you can Find more suggestions for instruction on that page, too.

Activity: Match an ASRP Profile—Ed and Ruth

Directions: In this activity you will create an instructional plan for either Ruth or ED.

- Assemble into two groups. One group will read Ruth's pages (p. 14) and the other read Ed's pages (pp. 15–16).
- Create an instructional plan for your learner, focusing on one of the components of reading.
- Choose a reporter to provide a brief summary of the plan for the whole group.

Ruth—Suggestions for Instruction for ASRP Profile 4 Learners

Reading components work together. Increasing skill on any component increases skill on the others.

Word Meaning (Vocabulary)

Some of the new vocabulary words that are appropriate to middle and high school social studies and science curricula also can be used for both Word Recognition and Spelling instruction. In that way, learners will be able not only to read and understand new words but also to use them in written work. There will be reciprocal reinforcement among all three of these reading components (Word Meaning [vocabulary], Word Recognition, and Spelling).

Silent Reading Comprehension

Other than subject content words, there are groups of words that are important for reading comprehension and writing clarity. Most helpful are the signal words that tell the reader "...how information is organized and provide clues about what is important." Some examples are: "... *also, next, although, even though, until, already, since, because, therefore, different from, either....*" (Fry et al., pp. 185-187).

Elicit Background Knowledge before reading. Provide additional Background Knowledge. Learners need all the information about the content that they missed in middle school and high school.

Fluency

Profile 4 learners have relatively strong Print Skills, including Fluency, but guided oral reading with discussion can be helpful for building Background Knowledge and developing skill in acquiring Word Meanings in context.

Effective techniques for practicing Fluency can be found in Chapter 5 of McShane, S. (2005). *Applying research in reading for adults: First steps for teachers*.

Reference: Retrieved from *Assessment Strategies & Reading Profiles* Web site at www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/FT_browse4_Suggest.htm on September 11, 2009.

Ed—Suggestions for Instruction for ASRP Profile 5 Learners

Reading components work together. Increasing skill on any component increases skill on the others.

Word Analysis, Word Recognition and Spelling

Have your learners mastered these prerequisite skills to accurate decoding (reading) and encoding (Spelling):

Do they know the names and sounds of the consonants with automaticity?

Do they know the names and the long and short sounds of the vowels with automaticity?

Do they know the principles of open and closed syllables?

Do they understand segmentation/chunking practices?

Profile 5 learners have not mastered the above skills to the point of being able to apply them automatically when they begin to read or spell a word. Developing *automaticity* in attaching sounds to symbols (phonological awareness) is a skill to aim for. However, Profile 5 learners have a dyslexic's reading component profile of low Print Skills (Alphabetics) and high Meaning Skills, and therefore, for some in this group, Phonological Awareness may never become fully automatic. But, practice will strengthen these skills.

- **Phonemic Awareness (PA):**
Any kind of practice that involves only the sounds of letters—not the letters themselves—will help focus learners' attention to "sounding out" a word before spelling it. Give them a PA assessment such as the *Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS)* (5 minutes per learner) to see where their mastery of consonant deletion gets shaky. Five minutes of a PA game (see the Spelling page) before you start a Spelling lesson will prompt the learners to listen to and manipulate sounds before they put symbols to the sounds in the lesson itself.
- **Phonological Awareness:**
To know just which letter combinations and syllable forms that a learner needs further practice on, you can administer a *Word Analysis assessment*. It will save instructional time in that you will be able to zero in on just those phonic elements that have not been mastered, that are holding up a learner's progress.
- **Visual Memory:**
Enlarge their bank of sight words. Similar techniques to those you would use to teach decoding phonetically irregular words (sight word practice) apply to teaching to encode (spell) them.

Word Meaning (Vocabulary)

Some vocabulary words that are appropriate to middle and high school social studies and science curricula can be used also for both Word Recognition and Spelling instruction. In that way, learners will be able not only to read and understand new words but also to use them in written work. There

will be reciprocal reinforcement among all three of these reading components (Word Meaning, Word Recognition, and Spelling).

Fluency

Many **Intermediate Level (GE 4-8.9)** readers read so slowly and laboriously that their comprehension is adversely affected. Their reading includes many repetitions and self-corrections because they rely on context to decode unfamiliar words. Assessment in *Word Recognition* reveals that they have difficulty with multi-syllable words and words that contain lower-frequency phonics patterns, such as vowel digraphs (-ai, -ay, -ea) and diphthongs (-au, -ow, -aw) or *ch* pronounced as /k/, as in *psychology*. These issues should be addressed in the Word Recognition and Spelling parts of the lesson. In addition, learners in Profile 5 usually need to review more basic Word Analysis skills, such as those identified in Sylvia Greene's Informal *Word Analysis Inventory*.

Nonnative Speakers of English (NNSE) who are intermediates sometimes also read slowly, but they usually do so for different reasons. They are able to decode unfamiliar English words, but they often slow down to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words and unfamiliar grammatical features.

Texts chosen for Fluency practice for intermediates should be at or slightly below learners' Word Recognition grade equivalent (GE).

Effective techniques for practicing Fluency can be found in Chapter 5 of McShane, S. (2005). *Applying research in reading for adults: First steps for teachers*.

Reference: Retrieved from *Assessment Strategies & Reading Profiles* Web site at www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/FT_browse5_Suggest.htm on September 11, 2009.

Learner Questionnaire

Questions in *bold faced italics* throughout the questionnaire are for non-native speakers of English only

1. Where were you born? _____, _____, _____ city or town, state, country
2. (If not born in U.S.) How old were you when you came to the USA? _____
3. What was the first language you spoke as a child? _____
3a. (If other than English) *Do you still speak this language?* yes / no
4. What is the highest school grade you completed not including adult education? _____
4a. (If left before graduating) Why did you leave school? _____
5. In what town or city, state (country) was that school? _____
6. (If not born in the U.S.) Did you attend school in (native country)? yes / no
7. (If yes to #6) How many years? _____
8. (If yes to #6) In what language were you taught? _____
9. *Can you read* (native language)? yes / no
10. *Can you write* (native language)? yes / no
11. *Can you read and write English? Yes / no / a little* 11a. *How old were you when you learned to read and write English?* _____
12. *Where did you learn to read and write English? (home, school)?* _____
13. How many schools did you attend as a child? _____
14. Did you ever repeat a grade? yes / no. (If yes) Which grade(s)? _____
15. Do you remember ever having trouble with reading as a child? yes / no
16. (If yes to #15) In which grade did you first have trouble? ___ first grade; ___ second or third grade; ___ fourth or fifth grade; ___ sixth, seventh or eighth grade; ___ high school
17. When you were a child did you ever participate in any of the following programs? If you did, please describe when and where.
 ___ individual tutoring _____ at home _____ in school _____
 ___ Chapter I or Title I _____
 ___ Resource Room _____
 ___ special classes _____
 ___ Core evaluation _____
 ___ Special education _____
18. What made you decide to take adult education classes? _____
19. What do you plan to do after you complete your adult education classes? _____

20. About how many hours a week do you read for pleasure (*in English*)? ___ less than 1; ___ 1–3; ___ 4–6; ___ more than 6
21. *About how many hours a week do you read for pleasure in (native language)? ___ less than 1; ___ 1–3; ___ 4–6; ___ more than 6*
22. What do you find hard about reading? Which of the following problems seem to apply to you when you read? English *native language*
- ___ ___ I can't read or pronounce the long, hard words.
 - ___ ___ I can't understand most of the hard words.
 - ___ ___ Sometimes I don't understand what I read.
 - ___ ___ I forget a lot of what I read right afterwards.
 - ___ ___ I forget a lot of what I read a few days later.
 - ___ ___ I read very slowly.
 - ___ ___ Other problems? _____
 - ___ ___ Spelling problems? _____

Reference: Retrieved from *Assessment Strategies & Reading Profiles* Web site at www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/FT_browse5_Suggest.htm on September 11, 2009.

Instructional Planning for Groups

Profiles and Grouping

Because individual adults' profiles are often uneven, you will probably need to form different groups for different activities. To see how this might work, consider the following example. The students are fictional, but their test scores are real, based on assessment data from adults participating in research studies (J. Alamprese, personal communication, July, 2004). *Note:* The profiles in this illustration are not a random sample of the students in these studies. They were chosen to represent a range. The test data below are a small sample of the data collected by the researchers.

Mid-City Career Center
Tuesday and Thursday ABE/GED Class
 Reading Component Assessment (Grade-Equivalent Scores)

Student	Decoding	Fluency	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension
	GE	GE	GE	GE
Michael B.	4.9	3.2	4.7	3.4
Jason D.	2.4	2.6	6.9	5.8
Stephanie J.	16.9	2.2	8.4	6.2
Luan K.	5.5	5.4	5.6	5.4
Keisha N.	2.4	2.4	4.9	4.9
Jin P.	14.4	2.6	5.1	3.1
Brian P.	7.8	4.6	8.4	3.3
Kyle T.	11.9	8.0	7.7	6.2
Juan V.	4.4	2.8	4.7	4.0

Source: Abt Associates Inc. (2004). ABE Database. Bethesda, MD: Author.

Discussion Activity: Planning and Grouping Decisions

- Where are the greatest needs for this class? Does the group have any common needs? If so, which components would you focus on for everyone?

- Which students need structured, systematic decoding instruction?

- How could you group the students for comprehension-strategy practice?

- How could you group the students for vocabulary building?

- How could you group the students for fluency work—
 - A. focused on accurate decoding?

 - B. focused on building phrasing and speed?

Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults

by Ashley Hager

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

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)	
Comprehension	25
Writing	30

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.

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. 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 4 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/-/l/-/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 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.

Syllable Types	
Syllable Type	Description
Closed Syllable (vc/cv)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one vowel per syllable - ends with one or more consonants - the vowel has a short sound <i>example:</i> pit, bath, splash, mitten
Vowel-Consonant-e Syllable (vce)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one vowel, then a consonant, then an e - the first vowel has a long sound - the e is silent <i>example:</i> hope, mine, bedtime
Open Syllable (v/cv), (vc/v)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one vowel - ends with the vowel - vowel has a long sound <i>example:</i> me, so, flu, why
R-Controlled Syllable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has three letters: a consonant, an "l," and an "e" - the e is silent - the consonant and the "l" are blended together <i>example:</i> little, grumble, table
The Double-Vowel Syllable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two vowels side-by-side making one sound - usually the first vowel is long, and the second is silent <i>example:</i> maid, may, leaf, seen, pie, goat
Credit: Wilson Reading System	

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

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

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

Comprehension

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

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

Conclusion

Progress can be excruciatingly slow for beginning-level adult readers. The volunteers who work in my class are struck by the lack of novelty in my classes. Each class follows the same routine (see the Typical Lesson Plan) and a significant amount of class time is spent reviewing previously taught skills and rereading texts. For beginning-level readers, and especially for those with reading disabilities, a predictable routine helps to alleviate anxiety. Students get upset when the class does not follow its expected course. The volunteers are also surprised that students do not feel insulted or embarrassed working with the letters of the alphabet and reading texts that may appear babyish.

On the contrary, after years of only using a hit or miss approach, my students are extremely relieved to discover that reading involves patterns of letters with predictable sounds.

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

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

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About the Author

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

Guided Questions: Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults

Directions: Please read the article on pp. 101–106 and answer the following questions. Be prepared to discuss the article and your answers to these questions with the group.

1. What eight components of reading does Hager teach?
2. Why does Hager directly teach the structure of the English language using a phonics-based approach?
3. Name and describe three of the phonics-based reading programs Hager draws upon to teach reading.
4. What improvement has Hager seen in students' reading from teaching phonological awareness?
5. List and describe the three phonological awareness tasks Hager uses with students.
6. How does Hager teach phonics and what benefit has there been to students?
7. Which technique has Hager found to be particularly effective in teaching decoding and why is it effective?

8. Name and describe the method Hager uses to teach sight word recognition.

9. How does Hager teach students to spell phonetically regular words?

Irregular words?

10. What methods for oral reading does Hager use to teach reading accuracy?

Fluency?

11. Why does Hager use student teachers when teaching oral reading?

12. What techniques does Hager use to teach higher-level comprehension and critical thinking?

13. What is the students' reaction to the repetition and routine of Hager's lessons?

Next Steps

1. What will your next steps be? How will you use what you learned in this session with your particular students?

2. Think about your next steps.

Do your next steps require collaboration with your learner(s) or with other program staff? If so, when can you meet with them to discuss what you learned?

Do your next steps require personal study of the research findings? If so, what will you do next? How will you put what you've learned into practice?

Do your next steps require finding new materials for learners? If so, what will you do next?

3. If time remains, write down the one research finding about reading that is most likely to influence your practice and why it will do so.

