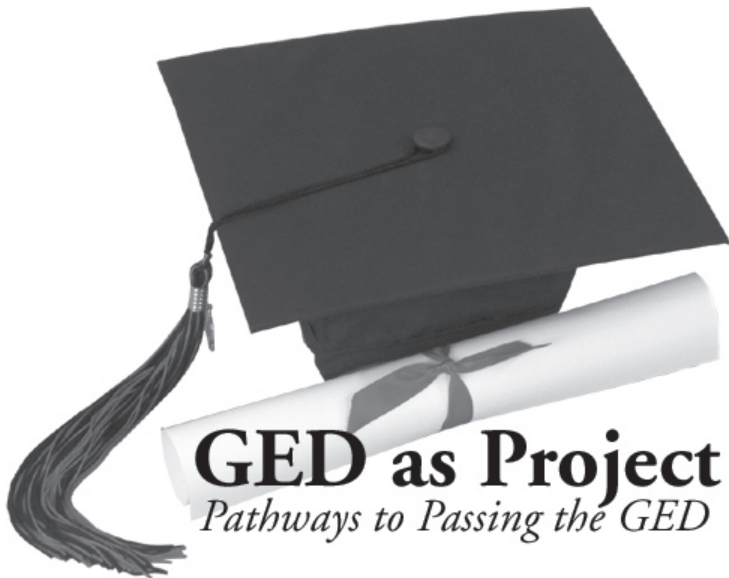


## Teaching Reading

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# Alphabetics and Fluency

## Strengthening the Foundations of Reading Comprehension

by SUSAN McSHANE

In your work with adult learners at the GED®-preparation level, you probably don't focus on all the components of reading. Since this is the most able group in a basic skills program, one tends to assume they don't need reading instruction. The *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* materials provide a solid framework for instruction but do not include specifics about all of the reading components. This article focuses on two components in particular, offering a rationale for identifying and addressing learners' needs in these areas and specific suggestions for instruction. The activities suggested should be appropriate for use in the *GED as Project* framework and may be adapted as appropriate for different groups and individuals.

### What are the components of reading?

#### Alphabetics

This term refers to the skills and abilities used in identifying words: phonemic awareness and decoding skills. In other words, readers use their awareness of individual speech sounds and their knowledge of the English spelling-sound correspondences to identify words on the printed page. Phonics instruction builds readers' decoding skills. The term "decoding" also may refer to the recognition of words by sight. Some words are originally learned as sight words; others become immediately recognizable after several exposures.

#### Fluency

Fluent reading requires (1) accurate

decoding/word identification, (2) a reasonably rapid rate, and (3) appropriate phrasing and expression. All three aspects of fluency are vital contributors to reading comprehension.

#### Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to understanding the meaning of words (and multi-word terms, like "public opinion," "money management," and "child development"). Vocabulary is essential to reading comprehension.

#### Comprehension

Comprehension is obviously "what reading is all about," and there are a number of research-based strategies learners can use to improve their comprehension.

*Continued on page 6 ...*

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## A Few Words on *Progress*

In recent years, adult reading research has shown us that, while many GED and pre-GED students achieve relatively high scores on assessments of reading comprehension, many have serious limitations in vocabulary, spelling, or fluency. These deficits can create barriers to students' attaining good scores on the GED Tests and have important implications for their future academic and career success. In this issue of *Progress*, we have brought together a collection of articles that focus on teaching reading.

Susan McShane, author of *Applying Research in Reading for Adults: First Steps for Teachers*, leads this issue with an article on alphabetic and fluency in which she explores strategies for working with GED students on these critical reading components. Bill Muth, Assistant Professor of Reading Education and Adult Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University, further elucidates the literacy gaps that GED students often have by describing the findings of a research project he conducted with adult learners within the Federal Bureau of Prisons. In addition, Marcia Phillips, Project Specialist with VALRC and former high school English teacher, gives some practical approaches to helping GED students get the most from language arts, reading instruction.

To round out this issue, two articles address specific reading issues outside of GED instruction. Nancy Faux, VALRC ESOL Specialist, discusses the differences between ESOL and ABE reading instruction, and Vicky Sanborn, VALRC Literacy Specialist, presents a case for incorporating alphabetic into tutor training. Today, with the increasing emphasis on the high school credential as the gateway to job training and career pathways, more ESOL and basic literacy students than ever have the goal of obtaining a GED certificate. Helping these students gain a solid foundation in reading *before* they enter GED classes considerably enhances their chances not only of passing the GED Tests, but also of continuing to develop the reading and writing skills that will aid their future success.

Evidence, or scientifically-based reading research, is relatively new in adult education. While there is much more that we need to know about how adults learn and how to provide effective instruction for them, we are beginning to develop a base of knowledge that, if used properly, can significantly improve learning outcomes. We are fortunate to have highly experienced adult educators, such as Susan McShane and Bill Muth, who are dedicated to bringing this information to us in practical and easy-to-understand ways. Our field greatly benefits from their work and the work of others who are equally committed to finding the best approaches to meeting the learning needs of our adult education students.



## Calendar

### November

1

National Family  
Literacy Day

17-18

National Conference on  
Effective Transitions in  
Adult Education

19

National Health  
Communication  
Conference  
[foundation.acponline.org](http://foundation.acponline.org)

19-21

Program Managers  
Meeting  
Richmond, VA

### December

7-10

Southeast International  
Reading Association  
Regional Conference  
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)





# A Letter from Elizabeth Hawa, OAEL Director

Most adult education practitioners would place reading at the top of our list of basic skills needing attention in the field of adult education and literacy. The ability to read and comprehend is the foundation upon which other basic academic skills are developed. Some 40 years ago, the phrase “Reading is Fundamental” was coined by a group of that same name that continues to promote reading for children. It goes without saying that reading is fundamental for adults as well. Throughout Virginia and the nation, we have seen many similar campaigns emerge over the years, addressing reading for both children and adults, often in a family literacy delivery model. We know the benefits when parents and other adults read to children—a connection is made that enhances learning and relationships.

Reading instruction is the heart and soul of our work in adult education and literacy. Today in adult education, we have the challenges of raising the reading levels not only of those for whom English is the primary language but also of an increasing number of non-native individuals who need instruction in the English language. A report released this summer by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher, America*, harshly describes the dichotomy in the United States when compared to the other 29 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) free-market countries:

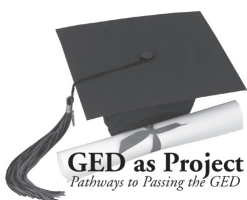
*... while we score as one of the*

*highest countries in numbers of well educated people we also score near the top in the largest number of people at the lowest educational levels—a form of inequality that affects all Americans.*

Melodye Bush, writing for the Education Commission of the States in September 2008, emphasized the growing awareness of states that there are serious gaps in adolescent reading skills. We know that young people who drop out of high school without adequate reading skills often end up in adult education classes. Reading skill development is critical at all levels of the educational curriculum. I am pleased to see this issue of *Progress* devoted to the critical area of

reading instruction.

Teachers and tutors today, like those in years gone by, recognize the importance of developing strong reading skills in the overall education of adults, whether low-level learners or GED-preparation learners. However, the methods used to teach those skills should be reassessed based on the profiles and needs of today’s learners. The benefits of reading are multi-dimensional, and so are the means through which one learns to read. I encourage you to revisit the meaning of quality reading instruction.



The GED Tests – and the jobs of the 21st Century – require higher order thinking skills and real life application of knowledge.

For adult learners, knowing content facts is no longer enough: understanding, application, and analysis of that content are now necessary.

*GED as Project* is an instructional process that encourages teachers to become *facilitators* and students to become *active participants* in learning how they learn. The process of learning and studying for the tests is, in itself, a powerful project for adults seeking high school equivalency.

For information on this project-based, inquiry process approach or the five-

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volume *GED as Project* series, contact the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center or visit the website:

[www.valrc.org/publications/gedasproject](http://www.valrc.org/publications/gedasproject)

Volume 21  
**LANGUAGE ARTS,  
READING**

The integrated approach to learning advocated throughout *GED as Project* is central to the reading volume. First of all, reading is fundamental to all of the other content areas of the GED Tests, including the word problems of the GED Mathematics Test. Second, it is important for learners to have the opportunity to discuss the reading process itself, not just questions about passages they have read. In many programs, the process of reading – developing strategies and methods – is not much discussed with adult readers. Finally,

reading is a thinking skill, and thinking skills are emphasized on the GED Tests. Like the other volumes of *GED as Project*, the reading volume uses questions taken directly from Official Practice Test A, but the process can be used with content from practically any curriculum.

The new *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* supplementary CD contains the full version of “The English Teacher: Developing Critical Reading Skills and Literary Awareness” by Marcia Phillips, including suggested reading lists for fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. The CD also contains “Alphabetics and Fluency: Strengthening the Foundations of Reading Comprehension” by Susan McShane, “Reading Characteristics of GED-Level Learners” by William R. Muth, and reading passages from the Official Practice Test. To order, contact the Resource Center.



# Reading Characteristics of GED-Level Learners

by BILL MUTH

In many adult learning systems, learners are assigned to literacy programs according to their scores on group-administered tests such as the TABE, ABLE, or CASAS. Often, learners with reading scores at or above the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level are placed in GED test-preparation programs (sometimes known as “Fast Track programs”), while those scoring below 8<sup>th</sup> grade are assigned to basic or intermediate literacy programs to build foundational knowledge and skills.

The reality is that many—perhaps most—adult learners do not have time to participate in extended literacy programs (Comings & Soricone, 2007), and thus Fast Track programs fulfill a critical need for GED-level learners. The GED credential alone does not make a large difference in earning power (Tyler, 2005). And the competitive global workplace demands increasingly higher skills of its workers (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Stites, 2004). Nevertheless, earning a GED certificate continues to be widely viewed as a legitimate educational milestone—more or less equivalent to a high school diploma. GED earners experience intangible benefits, such as higher self esteem, as well as pragmatic ones, such as access to advanced learning.

Notwithstanding these merits and

the recruiting and credentialing successes of GED Fast Track programs, policy makers, practitioners, and literacy learners need to address the long-term literacy needs of GED completers and GED-level learners—needs that typically are *not* addressed in GED test-preparation programs and may *not* be required to pass the test. Unfortunately for learners (and employers), these literacy skills *are* required for sustained success in higher education and in technologically advanced workplaces (Smith, 2003). The remainder of this article hints at the size of this problem by describing gaps in reading proficiency among 47 GED-level learners in prison-based literacy programs.

In 2004, I studied the reading characteristics of 120 literacy learners incarcerated in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP). A battery of eleven tests was

used to assess the learners’ achievement in overall reading comprehension and in component areas of reading such as: phonemic awareness, word recognition (sight word reading), word attack (decoding), reading rate (a proxy for fluency), word meaning (oral receptive and expressive vocabulary), and memory. A full description of the tests, assessment protocols, data analysis methods, and validity concerns are reported elsewhere (Muth, 2004).

In the FBOP study, 47 of 120 learners achieved reading comprehension scores at or above the 8.0 grade equivalent level, which would have made them eligible for placement in the FBOP’s GED-level literacy program.<sup>1</sup> However, an examination of their component-level reading skills revealed that many of these learners had extensive instructional needs in reading, despite their relatively strong performance on tests of reading comprehension. These component-level needs (in areas such as decoding and fluency) went well beyond the scope of GED test-preparation programs that focus on the ability to comprehend content-area (science, history, literature, etc.) passages. In such programs, reading comprehension strategies (such as text look-backs) are often presented as test-taking strategies.

In my study, a third (16 of 47) of the GED-level learners<sup>2</sup> scored *at or below fourth grade* on tests of both sight word recognition *and* word attack. In addition, none of these 16 read above 150 words per minute, and many had much

1 It should be noted that nine of the 47 learners were placed in intermediate literacy programs at the time of the testing. However, based on their reading comprehension scores they would have qualified for upper-level (GED-level) test-preparation programs.

2 For the remainder of the chapter, the term “GED-level learner” will be used to refer to those who achieved an 8.0 or higher grade equivalent score in reading comprehension. It should not be misconstrued as an endorsement of this convention by the author.

**Table 1: Component Scores for FBOP GED-Level Learners**

	<i>number of learners</i>	<b>Word Recognition GE</b>	<b>Word Attack GE</b>	<b>Word Meaning GE</b>	<b>Words per Minute</b>	<b>Silent Reading Comprehension GE</b>
<b>Mean (Standard Deviation)</b>	47	5.6 (2.5)	4.7 (2.8)	6.4 (2.7)	135 (27.1)	10.1 (1.5)

GE = mean grade equivalent; SD = Standard Deviation

**Table 2: Component Scores for Native English Speakers versus English Language Learners**

	<i>number of learners</i>	<b>Word Recognition GE</b>	<b>Word Attack GE</b>	<b>Word Meaning GE</b>	<b>Words per Minute</b>	<b>Silent Reading Comprehension GE</b>
<b>Native English Speakers</b>	37	5.6 (2.6)	4.9 (3.1)	7.1 (2.6)	132 (28.7)	10.2 (1.5)
<b>English Language Learners</b>	10	5.2 (1.9)	4.7 (1.6)	4.0 (1.7)	146 (16.3)	9.7 (1.5)

lower rates (as low as 71 words per minute). This may be compared to an optimal reading rate among U.S. adults and college students of about 200-250 words per minute (Harris & Sipay, 1990). Further, 14 GED-level learners scored below 4<sup>th</sup> grade on word meaning (vocabulary) tests.

However, we cannot deduce from this that a third of all GED-level learners in the U.S. have need for formal instruction in decoding, fluency, and vocabulary (in addition to comprehension). The sample was not large enough to make generalizations to the larger population of adult literacy learners in the U.S. On the other hand, far more than a third of the FBOP GED-level learners had difficulties with one or more components of reading.

The mean scores for the 47 GED-level learners are presented in Table 1. Note that, as a group, the average score for *every* component area was well below the reading comprehension score typically used to place learners in GED test-preparation programs. Further, these across-the-components low-intermediate needs were found consistently among

both native English learners and English language learners (Table 2). As a group, however, the native English speakers achieved higher scores in vocabulary, while the English language learners had slightly faster reading rates.

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*Policy makers,  
practitioners, and  
learners need to address  
the long-term literacy  
needs of GED-level  
learners—needs that  
may not be required to  
pass the test.*

---

Only eleven of the 47 GED-level learners achieved consistent scores at or above the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level in all component areas. But, compared to adults in the general U.S. population, these learners, on average, were slower readers and scored in the low end of the average range on measures of word recognition, vocab-

ulary, and memory. None of these eleven learners—the strongest readers of the 120-member FBOP sample—were English language learners (ELLs), confirming earlier findings that ELLs present even greater challenges with English-based literacy than native English-speaking literacy learners (Collier & Thomas, 2001; Davidson & Bruce, 2003).

Even these eleven “strongest” learners presented histories of learning difficulties as children. Five of the eleven learners repeated one or more grades in school as children, three received special education support in school, and three received Title One or Chapter One help. Seven reported a serious head injury in the past, and eight reported problems with substance abuse.

As a group, the achievement of these eleven strongest literacy learners was still in the low-average/average range when compared to same-age peers in the general adult U.S. population. For example, their aggregate performances on three tests that provided scores standardized among U.S. adults were as follows: Woodcock Johnson-III Word At-

*Continued on page 14 ...*

## How Is Adult ESOL Reading Instruction Different from ABE Instruction?

by NANCY FAUX

An essential part of instruction in any adult education class is to help the learners, whether native or non-native English speakers, learn how to read in English. Although the goals for literacy proficiency are similar for both groups, according to Miriam Burt, Joy Peyton, and Carol Van Duzer at the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, there are differences in how reading instruction should be carried out for adult native English speakers and English language learners. What may be appropriate for native speakers in some cases is not always appropriate for non-native speakers.

In a notable 2005 research brief, *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruc-*  
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*tion Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?*, the authors discuss reading strategies for ABE and their applicability for teaching ESOL students. After introducing the four components of reading (vocabulary, alphabets and word analysis, fluency, and comprehension) defined by John Kruidenier in *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction* and listing his suggested instructional strategies for teaching each component to native English speakers, the brief discusses how some of these strategies are not suitable for those who are learning the English language. The brief goes on to review special issues for English language learners (ELLs) for each component and give suggestions for working with ELLs.

The discussion targets the differences in instruction for ELLs compared to ABE learners, which in many instances stem from ELLs' limited vocabulary base, written and oral. Instructional strategies that rely on oral comprehension of vocabulary may not be successful with those that lack English oral skills. For example, teaching vocabulary through semantic sets (e.g., foods, days of the week) may actually impede vocabulary acquisition. Research has shown that, if new words are presented together, ELLs may confuse their meanings.

Another instructional strategy that is not effective with non-native English speakers is the use of choral readings in

*Continued on page 15 ...*

# Aphabetics and Fluency: Strengthening the Foundations of Reading Comprehension

(continued from front page)

*However*, if a reader has limited abilities in any of the other reading components, comprehension often is affected. All of the components are important!

## What do we know about the reading fluency and word identification skills of adult learners at the GED-preparation level?

The Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) (Strucker & Davidson, 2003) was designed to describe readers enrolled in adult education programs. The 955 randomly selected adult learners who participated in the study included 676 native English speakers in ABE classes and 279 learners who were studying English in classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Each of the students was given a battery of 11 reading and language assessments to identify their needs in the reading component skills. The researchers also interviewed the students to learn about their educational histories and reading habits.

The ARCS identified three groups of readers: (1) GED / Pre-GED (34%), (2) Intermediate (56%), and (3) Lower Level / Beginners (11%). Although one would expect the beginners to have limited skills in any or all of the components, many educators were no doubt surprised to learn that the intermediate- and GED-level learners also had limitations.

For example, the GED / Pre-GED group had scores ranging from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade equivalent (GE) on a silent reading comprehension test, but this test did not reveal their other needs. In fact, using the results of the specific assessments administered, three clusters within the group were identified: (1) Strong GED, (2) Pre-GED with vocabulary / background information needs, and (3) Pre-GED with vocabulary / spelling / rate

(fluency) needs.

The study revealed (among many other findings) that about 40% of this group were in “Cluster 3,” with limitations in oral reading rate (an aspect of fluency) and word recognition. In fact, although their average score on a silent reading comprehension test was 10.9 GE, the average word recognition score for the adults in Cluster 3 was only 6.9 GE.

Of course, one cannot help but be impressed that many people with limited word identification skills and fairly slow reading rates are able to achieve relatively high comprehension-test scores. That’s the good news: they are able to use other abilities to compensate for their limitations. Maybe they worked hard on the test and they’ve developed the ability to make good guesses based on context clues. However, one also wonders if they will be able to *improve* their reading with such weak foundational skills and whether these difficulties will limit their chances of success in postsecondary education or training.

It does seem clear that a silent reading comprehension test, like the TABE or CASAS, does not give teachers enough information about learners’ reading strengths and needs. You can’t assume that Pre-GED- and GED-level students are competent readers, although they may think they are.

## How can we learn about readers’ strengths and needs?

Formal testing in the component areas is an option, but if this is not realistic right now, you can learn a lot about learners’ alphabetics skills and fluency by listening to them read aloud. You can intentionally provide opportunities for reading aloud.

For example, as you work with a group on literature, science, or social studies texts, you might add reading-aloud activities to your regular routine as you discuss features of the text, needed background knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. You may find that not everyone volunteers to read aloud, but after it becomes a part of your regular practice, more of the learners may be willing to do so.

Afterward, be sure to make notes for yourself about the kinds of texts and words that learners have trouble with and the specific fluency problems that individuals demonstrate. You may discover that some people misread words and don’t notice it, and that others read in a word-by-word fashion, without proper phrasing and expression. This kind of informal assessment will suggest who needs to work on specific aspects of decoding skills or fluency.

## If you learn that some or all of the adults need work on alphabetics skills or fluency, how do you get them to “buy in” to this kind of instruction?

Adults who are studying for the GED Tests may want to focus on math and / or writing skills. They may not see reading as one of their primary needs. But because reading comprehension is so important, you must help them to understand their needs and work to improve their skills.

You might begin by introducing the components of reading. Ask learners to consider why and how each component is vital to comprehension. You might use the following examples:

- If you don’t read the words correctly, you might miss the point or get the wrong idea. Even one or two mis-

takes—if they're important words—can have a big effect on your comprehension.

- If you read too slowly, you might not remember the beginning of a long sentence or paragraph by the time you get to the end.
- If you don't group words into phrases correctly, you might find a sentence hard to understand. The same thing can happen if you don't emphasize the right words or recognize the feelings being expressed. (Explain that this happens to everybody once in a while. You can demonstrate how you then re-read the sentence with attention to punctuation and different phrasing, emphasis, or tone. These aspects of fluency are especially important when reading literature.)
- It's also important to understand the words. Although you don't have to be able to define every word, you should have a reasonably accurate sense of the meaning of most of them.
- Paying attention to meaning—monitoring comprehension—makes it less likely that you'll get to the end of the story or article and realize you missed the point or you don't know what happened.

You also might present a brief overview of the ARCS project to assure the learners that lots of people need to work on specific reading skills and strategies. Then offer opportunities for them to experience the difference that repeated reading practice can make.

Have learners read a poem with a partner and then share with each other and the group any improvements they noticed after the second or third reading.

They also might do the same thing with a selection from a play. Everyone knows you have to rehearse, so repeated reading only makes sense.

After they have considered the components and become aware of their own and others' strengths and needs through various opportunities to read aloud, you might next ask the learners to develop or revise their Reading Action Plans (see

*GED As Project: Language Arts, Reading, Inquiry Activity 2*) to include specific decoding skills or fluency development, as appropriate.

You could add a few open-ended questions about specific reading components to the Reading Action Plan activity, perhaps in the first step, identifying the problem.

Examples:

- What would improve my comprehension of difficult material?
- Would I like to read more quickly?
- Do I need to read more smoothly?
- Do I need strategies for identifying unfamiliar words?

## How can we strengthen learners' alphabetic skills?

Based on informal assessments (oral reading) and their individual plans, you will have some idea of learners' specific needs. Some may need practice with three-letter consonant blends, for example. But (even more likely) you will discover that many of your students could use some work with multisyllabic words. You might try teaching these decoding strategies:

- Teach or review prefixes and suffixes. Some words can be easily divided by removing these affixes.
- Teach rules for dividing words into syllables, and then have learners practice "sounding out" the syllables and blending them together.<sup>1</sup> *Remind them that guessing is only the last resort.* Lots of people just look at the first few letters and then guess. They should try to sound out the whole word.
- Remind them that an important step in the decoding process is to be sure that the word they have identified makes sense in the context. They should be monitoring their comprehension. If it doesn't make

<sup>1</sup> *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists* (Fry & Kress, 2006) is one place you can find the phonics rules, including those related to dividing words into syllables.

sense, have they identified it correctly? Could they try a different vowel sound in one or more syllables or perhaps stress a different syllable? If the word still doesn't make sense, it's possible they have run into a word that is not in their vocabulary. Maybe at that point it would help to ask someone or check the dictionary.

Be sure to demonstrate the decoding process explicitly with several examples for each of the strategies as you introduce them. Then have learners practice the process with a partner, reading a text with a few difficult words and applying what they've learned to identify them.

## How can learners improve their reading fluency?

Based on informal assessments and learners' individual plans, you will know the appropriate focus areas for individuals. The research says that *guided repeated oral reading* may lead to improvement in all three aspects of fluency: rate, accuracy, and phrasing and expression. Following are a few ways for learners to get this kind of guided practice:

Individuals may practice with a book on tape: listening, reading aloud, and timing themselves. If they keep track of the time, after two or three repetitions they should see clear evidence of increasing speed. This is, of course, only one aspect of fluency, but it's concrete and easily documented. An excellent, free resource for this kind of practice is *Reading Skills for Today's Adults*, on the website of the Marshall, Minnesota Adult Basic Education program ([www.marshalladulthoodeducation.org](http://www.marshalladulthoodeducation.org)). The site allows learners to hear each selection being read aloud and to download a timer for their use as they read the passages. Unfortunately, the most difficult passages are only written at the eighth-grade level and you might think they are too simple. However, because the passages are very interesting, you may find this resource

*Continued on page 12 ...*



# The English Teacher

## Developing Critical Reading Skills and Literary Awareness

by MARCIA PHILLIPS

When we began developing the *GED as Project* series, our focus was on the new approach the testing service was taking to the General Educational Development Tests. In each subject area, we worked closely with content area experts, many of whom also were very familiar with the adult education learner. These experts widely applauded the metacognitive approach focusing on developing critical thinking skills that we took with the different content areas. The inquiry activities in the entire series show how any lesson any instructor has used with a class can be cast into an inquiry process, critical thinking exercise, using the five-step model. Activities for all the content areas use test questions from the Official Practice Test A to display both the content area and the level at which the tests are based.

The integrated approach to learning, so strongly advocated throughout *GED as Project*, is central to the reading volume. Reading is fundamental to all of the other content areas of the GED Tests. In addition, we feel it is important for learners to become aware of the reading process. Often in GED preparation, little actual reading instruction takes place; readers are assumed to be good-enough readers. This may not be the case. The process of developing strategies and being an active reader is usually not much discussed with adult learners. With *GED as Project*, we give learners the opportunity to think about how to develop reading strategies that not only will help them pass the GED Tests, but will be of use to them in their jobs and daily lives. A third reason for this broad emphasis on the reading process is that reading is a thinking skill. Developing thinking skills is paramount for success not only on the GED Tests, but also in the world of tomorrow.

As good readers develop, they improve at the complex group of skills that makes up reading comprehension. They both find and build meaning from the words on the page. Good readers know to bring what they already know about a topic into reading about that topic, filling in the gaps in the content to make inferences and determine the relationships of various parts of the passage to the whole. They use decoding skills to recognize the

words on the page. They have an established purpose for their reading, which colors the process. But many adult learners lack these basic reading skills because they left school early. They are much more likely not to be readers for pleasure or for learning. While their reading assessment scores may be in the passing range, they

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Often in GED preparation, little actual reading instruction takes place; readers are assumed to be good-enough readers. This may not be the case.

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are likely to have significant weaknesses in building comprehension from the printed text. In particular, they can exhibit troubles with fluency and vocabulary, as well as have little understanding of the strategies they use to make sense out of the text. Even good readers can be unaware of the steps they follow to build their comprehension. Building the awareness of these readers will strengthen their skills as well.

Since the time we began our work on a metacognitive approach to developing reading strategies, much research has been carried out in the under-educated adult population that we serve. And while

our recommended inquiry approach still seems very strong to a new set of consulting content area experts, we have felt that certain areas of the reading volume could use some strengthening.

The publication of Susan McShane's study *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults*, the growing concerns over the transitioning adult student, and the development of content standards, as well as the impending new GED Tests, make this a propitious time to make some additions to the *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* volume.

In the other books, we provided considerable assistance in classroom instruction, extension activities and lesson ideas. In *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading*, we focused attention on pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading skills development. However, we did not pay sufficient attention to one very real problem area for the adult learner. By and large, this student has not been a good reader, nor has this student enjoyed reading. Even if your GED preparatory students are the best of your readers, they are still reading at a low- to mid-secondary range. So, they still need to develop strong alphabets, fluency, and vocabulary building skills, in addition to the comprehension skills. Even for the most advanced adult learners, you will want to continue to develop their phonemic awareness and increase their recognition of the sounds of consonants and vowels in the words with which they are unfamiliar. A lack of fluency means that the reader is looking at the words but not recognizing the meaning contained in the text (McShane, 2005), and non-readers have significantly smaller vocabularies than readers. These lacks translate into significant comprehension difficulties for the student:

*People who don't read well don't*

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*read much, and therefore don't learn new words the way good readers do, through reading. In addition, adults who don't finish high school probably don't have content knowledge typically acquired in science, literature, and social studies classes (Snow and Strucker,*

**Even if your GED preparatory students are the best of your readers, they are still reading at a low- to mid-secondary range.**

*2000). Reading requires inferences, and inferences are based on prior knowledge (Hirsch, 2003). Adults may know a great deal about their work and special interest areas, but much of what they read in class may require experience with "book learning." (McShane 2005)*

## The Reading Template

1. Identifying the Problem
2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem
  - Preview the passage
  - Activate prior knowledge
  - Consider / build interest
  - Set a purpose
3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks (individually, in pairs, or in small groups)
  - Clarify words / sentences / paragraphs
  - Use a reading comprehension strategy
    - Analyzing
    - Predicting
    - Questioning
    - Defining unfamiliar words through context
    - Imaging
    - Determining—important, unimportant, and / or interesting
  - Determine the kind of question
  - Answer questions
  - Find support for the answer
4. Sharing with Others (with pairs, small groups, and / or the whole class)
5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

The GED Tests focus on the skills of reading and writing, but these are not separate subjects in secondary schools. The English class, where students do their reading and writing, stresses the content of the materials and strives to develop some understanding of the structure and conventions of different genres. This is why the GED Language Arts, Reading Test uses the different categories of prose, poetry, drama, and nonfiction. Prose fiction requires different thinking and approaches from nonfiction. Different types of nonfiction require different skills from each other; a popular biography would be read very differently from an owner's manual or employee handbook. Poetry requires an understanding of the function of rhythm and use of figurative language. Drama is a combination of two very different texts. All of these genres present very different, but very real, challenges to the learner with limited vocabulary and understanding.

## Reading Fiction

Most readers, even the poorest, can go through a plot outline chronologically. This, however, may not show any understanding of why things happened or give any insight into the theme the author is exploring. Reading comprehension takes a deeper understanding, not only of the plot and its unwinding, but of the characters, the backdrop against which the story takes place, and the cause and effect of the occurrences.

The questions on the GED Language Arts, Reading Test consider character analysis, particularly as seen in reactions to the situations in which the character finds him- or herself. To understand these personal traits, the reader must infer a great deal from the actions of the characters as well as their thoughts and conversations. Inference is a higher skill than recall, and its development requires knowledge and understanding that may be in short supply in your learners.

One of the best things instructors can do is to begin to develop a body of knowledge within the students in their classes. The GED Language Arts, Reading Test studies early fiction, fiction of

the first half of the 20th Century, and contemporary fiction. The test, of course, takes several detail-rich paragraphs of a short story or novel and asks a number of questions based upon that section. To learn about the different fiction genres, your students should read not excerpts,

**One of the best things instructors can do is to begin to develop a body of knowledge within the students in their classes.**

but complete stories, in order to build up the knowledge they lack.

In the class or group discussion of the stories, learners should analyze character development, recognize cause and effect in the plot development and character reactions, and be able to identify the elements of the plot. In addition, they should be able to discuss the stated or implied theme of the story and understand the narrator's point of view. From there, the readers can begin to interpret tone, mood, and style and understand the use of symbols, other figurative language, and imagery. These are increasingly difficult challenges for poorer readers to understand, first, because such readers tend to be focusing on the individual words on the page, without gathering any of the richness behind those words, and second, because they are reading at the literal level, not at the subjective level.

A good story to assign for point of view and tone is "Haircut" by Ring Lardner. Considered one of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> Century American short stories, it is often anthologized. Its single character is the narrator, a small-town barber who tells his story to a new customer, the reader. As he unfolds the story of the town's practical joker, the reader gets a very different impression of the now-dead character about whom the barber is reminiscing. It is a good way for uncertain readers to begin to read into the

*Continued on page 10 ...*

# The English Teacher: Developing Critical Reading Skills and Literary Awareness (continued from page 9)

words on the page. Irony and satire are also exceptionally difficult for the literal reader. Even though most people can recognize sarcasm when they hear it, those who do not read a lot do not expect to find that attitude on the printed page.

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Themes of fiction tend to reflect social concerns set against a backdrop of change or conflict. ... But under-educated adults are often completely unaware of the world about which they are reading.

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Themes of fiction tend to reflect social concerns set against a backdrop of change or conflict. In American literature, stories can be set in war: the American Revolution, the Civil War, two World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, or the Viet Nam or Korean conflicts. Other great eras of social change are the westward expansion, the great wave of immigration of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, or the industrial changes of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Others might show the changing mores of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries in a microcosm: the women's movement, civil rights, immigration, the Depression, or Prohibition. In English literature, much of the fiction of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century examines the class structure and how it has shifted and changed under the combined influences of the Industrial Revolution and the forces of family, war, and empire.

For students to understand the themes and the forces of the times upon the characters, they must have a good knowledge of the times about which the author is writing and the changes that are occurring. That is why one of the first steps in pre-reading is to consider

prior knowledge. But under-educated adults are often completely unaware of the world about which they are reading. Mark Twain wrote of the quintessential boyhood, and the freedom of escape on the river and, incidentally, was among the first authors to show the difficulties of racism that have troubled the United States from its inception. Not knowing his background, or the role of Missouri in the Civil War, or his use of biting satire amid the romantic view of nature and the river as the great American character will keep the reader from understanding Clemens' themes and purpose. Without an understanding of the background and times of the writer, the reader/learner is seriously disadvantaged.

It is even more important for the students who plan on continuing their education to have this kind of literature experience. They probably did not read or pay much attention to the English classes they had in their early secondary years, and since they did not complete their high school education, they do not have the experience of having read authors who make up the established body of our literary heritage. Allusions to a Dickensian life, or a Hemingway hero, or a Gatsby-type character will have no meaning to most adult education students. It will be up to the language arts instructor to develop that understanding by building the knowledge.

In reading fiction, it is important for the reader to be able to make inferences and draw conclusions from the reading material, so that the plot and story line make sense and the reader is comfortable that he has understood the resolution. Learning Projects 3, 5 and 8 in *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* all cover reading fiction. In addition to those activities on inferences, drawing conclusions, making predictions, and discerning the important from the unimportant, Inquiry Activity 3-1, which discusses monitoring, is particularly helpful for poorer readers to begin to develop a

deeper understanding of what they have read. Inquiry Activity 3-3 addresses using inference to understand the characters, particularly helpful to developing that higher-level skill.

## Reading Poetry

At least, reading fiction is fairly straightforward. Poetry is filled with figurative language, and individual word choices are fraught with emotional content that means little to the literal reader. Lines and verses have intrinsic meaning that even able readers can struggle to comprehend. You will have to bring your literal readers along, line by line.

One really good vehicle for that, surprisingly, could be to use Shakespeare's sonnets. Most poor readers will continue to struggle over poetry. Anthologies or literature books are not necessarily helpful in developing an interesting poetry unit or lesson, because their selections do not often arouse the interest of the readers. Scholastic Book Services publishes a wide range of high-interest, easily understood poetry that works very well for secondary level learners.

Generally, it works best to ask questions of the group as you discuss the meaning of a poem. Start with the title, if there is one. Why did the poet choose that? What does it have to do with the poem? What is the effect of the versification? Does the poet use repetition? Why? Why are the comparisons or images used? What effect do they have on the reader? In *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading*, Learning Project 7 covers poetry. In the first inquiry activity (7-1), questioning and clarifying words are covered. The poem discussed is "Sympathy," by Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

It often works well to start a poetry unit or discussion with songs. These days, compact discs often come with lyrics written out for the listener. Song lyrics are a very accessible form of poetry, which English teachers have taken advantage of for years in preparing their

poetry units. Students can bring favorite recordings in to class and analyze the figures of speech, identify the stated or implied themes, and recognize the structural elements of verse and refrain.

Because poetry is written in such an intensely personal manner, it is also responded to intensely and personally. Different class members will have dif-

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It often works best to start a poetry unit or discussion with songs.

Song lyrics are a very accessible form of poetry.

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ferent responses to the poems that are discussed. That in itself is a very effective way of showing the personal response we have. You can also have students write poetry as a group. Another intriguing poetry writing idea is to explain the mechanics of haiku to your students and have them write the three lines that make up the poem. These can be written about a pet, or child, or dinner, or the weather. Learners like these very short stylized approaches because they understand the rules and won't have to agonize to come up with something to fill the page. They will amaze themselves, if not you, with what they create. Writing their own poems will make the poetry of others more accessible.

Don't give up on this process. It may

## Suggested Dramatists

- **William Shakespeare:** *Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Macbeth*
- **Neil Simon:** *Barefoot in the Park, The Odd Couple, Brighton Beach Memoirs*
- **Lorraine Hansberry:** *A Raisin in the Sun*
- **Thornton Wilder:** *Our Town, The Matchmaker*
- **Tennessee Williams:** *The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire*
- **Arthur Miller:** *Death of a Salesman, The Crucible*
- **William Saroyan:** *The Time of Your Life*
- **Edward Albee:** *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, A Delicate Balance*
- **Harold Pinter:** *The Homecoming, The Caretaker*
- **George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber:** *Dinner at Eight*
- **Agatha Christie:** *The Mousetrap*

help to look at the Official Practice Tests that your program no longer uses for pre- and post-testing and use the poems found there for your class discussions. The questions given can help you structure your discussion. They focus on the figurative language, understanding the poet's feelings, and taking that understanding into a further or different situation. Another interesting point is that over each reading section, the developers of the test have superimposed a question, the answer to which will help the learner to understand the poem.

## Reading Drama

The makers of the GED Tests include a drama selection on the test because considerable drama is taught in secondary English. In high school literature classes, students are primarily exposed to the works of William Shakespeare, typically *Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Macbeth*. A general knowledge of and familiarity with the lines of these tragedies is a part of the basic knowledge that high school graduates have, even if they do not understand much, if anything, about the plays.

The interesting aspect of reading a play is that the reader is actually dealing with two separate texts. The first text provides the stage directions and dialogue prompts, presented in italics. That is read in a different manner than the actual dialogue, set in roman type. Readers will have to understand the action of the play by fusing the two texts. Through the dialogue, readers will see the devel-

opment of the plot and recognize character traits and interactions. In plays, the audience watches the self-exploration of the main characters and their interactions with one another. In earlier times, plays tended to depict large themes and heroic figures; more currently, they show families or small communities. We see these people, heroic or familiar, in times of crisis.

Generally speaking, adult learners will be far more familiar with plays than with poetry. Instructors can build on their learners' prior knowledge from watching television shows and movies to have their class understand what they are reading. You can use a familiar movie or television program to discuss plot effects, the ideas of conflict and resolution, character revelation, and dramatic necessity – the reasons certain things happen or characters die or suddenly appear. In Learning Project 2, the reading strategy predicting is highlighted. You may wish to refer to that project for some ideas to use with other reading lessons as well.

Plays are meant to be performed. That means they should be read aloud in class. This gives multiple class members the opportunity to read and everyone the need to pay attention. Most reading experts encourage more reading aloud than typically occurs in classrooms, so this is an opportunity to build oral fluency in your students in a manner that they will find more interesting than reading aloud one or two paragraphs at a time.

## Reading Nonfiction

If poor or disinterested readers read anything at all, it is likely to be nonfiction. This category includes a wide range of material, from the daily or weekly newspaper, magazines, owners' manuals, and how-to guides; to insurance policies, buyers' agreements, guarantees, and legal documents; to employees' manuals, job procedures, and repair or user guides. For the majority of GED hopefuls, this is the reading that they do now and will need to strengthen for their future success. If students expect to continue into post-secondary education, they will need to

*Continued on page 12 ...*



# The English Teacher: Developing Critical Reading Skills and Literary Awareness (continued from page 11)

be able to read critically and effectively, whether it is an editorial or an operations manual for a new piece of equipment to be used on the job.

In fact, workplace materials are a serious challenge for many lower-educated adults. Since professionals in the field, not reading experts, write them, they are written at a very high readability level. Colleagues and I have often, during workplace interventions, assessed the readability levels of the employee handbook, which contains material about responsibilities, termination, benefits, and the rights of the employer and the employee. The general reading level, based on word and sentence length, is always post-secondary. This is not advantageous to the employee, who may find himself in a workplace difficulty, without redress, because he has not been able to understand what was written. Learning Project 4 in the *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading* volume shows techniques for summarizing, determining the purpose, and applying the material (IAs 4-1, 4-2, and 4-4) using a workplace document.

If the stakes are lower for readers of opinion pieces, they still have ramifications. Reading without understanding the point of view and bias of the piece means that the reader's understanding is not complete. Readers must also be able to recognize the author's purpose.

Test questions on the nonfiction pieces focus on being able to apply the information the reader has gathered. That is the purpose of any user's guide or how-to manual. Reading the directions carefully and following them correctly is the ultimate test of that type of reading material. Another reading skill that is tested in nonfiction reading is recognizing the supporting details and being able to determine which details are important to know and understand and which may be interesting or helpful, but not so important, details. Tone and voice of the author can be useful to understanding as well, particularly in opinion pieces.

Newspapers are, of course, one of your easiest and best resources for working on factual and opinion pieces. Read the front page articles and look at the

editorials that opine on the news of the day. For some learners, the sports pages will be a real boon. Have learners read the accounts of a game, or a race, that they have watched. Then have them read an analysis of that contest. Particularly if they have a strong favorite, or if they had watched the event, their agreements and disagreements will make a lot of what you say about point of view, tone, and bias very clear indeed. ■

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*Marcia Phillips, Projects Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, has been a writer, editor, and coordinator for the GED as Project series.*

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Workforce Improvement Network (2003). *GED as Project: Language Arts, Reading*. Virginia Department of Education.

# Alphabets and Fluency: Strengthening the Foundations of Reading (continued from page 7)

useful for many of your students.

Learners also might work in pairs, reading to each other and modeling phrasing and expression for each other.

Another possibility, mentioned previously, is to have learners practice and then present a poem or drama selection (or perhaps a humorous article or opinion piece) to the class. Let them choose selections they find somewhat challenging. They can share their experiences in identifying or defining words and making decisions about phrasing and expression.

Some GED-level learners may benefit from instruction in specific components of reading. Even adults who believe

they are good readers may discover that learning specific strategies improves their comprehension. By helping them to understand the reading process and identify their own needs, you will have taken an important first step toward strengthening their reading. Teaching them specific strategies to address their needs may increase the likelihood that they will earn higher scores on the GED Tests and perhaps be more successful in their "next steps"—on the job or in further education and training. ■

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*for information about training on adult reading instruction and other staff development offerings. Call 504-584-1133 x149 or email traininginfo@famlit.org.*

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# The Importance of Incorporating Alphabetics Into Your Tutor Training Workshop

by VICTOIRE GERKENS SANBORN

I'd like to piggyback onto Susan McShane's excellent article and take a moment to examine how important it is to incorporate alphabetics, the first component of reading, into the curriculum of a tutor training workshop. Lack of phonemic awareness does not improve over time without intervention, and adults who lack this basic reading skill will struggle with learning to read all their lives. According to Bonita Grossen, Research Associate with The National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators, "Phonemic awareness is the ability to segment words and syllables into constituent sounds units, or phonemes. Converging evidence from all the research centers shows that deficits in phonemic awareness reflect the core deficit in reading difficulties. These deficits are characterized by difficulties in segmenting syllables and words into constituent sound units called phonemes – in short, there is a difficulty in turning spelling into sounds." In his 2002 study, *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*, John Kruidenier stated that non-reading adults "are unable to consistently perform, on their own, almost all phonemic awareness tasks."

Adults who lack phonemic awareness need explicit training in learning sounds. Yet in their quest to shorten workshop instruction hours to accommodate volunteers, many of Virginia's nonprofit literacy programs now overlook teaching alphabetics. In fact, in a recent train-the-trainer workshop, all but two of the trainers admitted to not incorporating any alphabetics into their tutor training at all. This trend is alarming. Volunteer tutors, many of whom have never taught before, must be shown how to teach phonemes, the smallest isolated sounds, and given strategies to help their students hear, separate, blend, and manipulate these sounds. Research-based resources for teaching alphabetics

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## Online Resources for Teaching Alphabetics

### [Alphabetics: Research and Teaching Strategies](#)

California Adult Education Literacy Professional Development Project  
Research Digest No. 5: *Evidence-based Reading Instruction*

### [Adult Reading Components Study \(ARCS\)](#)

#### [Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles](#)

[www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles](http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles)

In particular, see the Print Skills (Alphabetics): [Phonemics](#) section of the mini-course:

### [Alphabetics](#) from [A Summary of Scientifically Based Research Principles: Teaching Adults to Read](#)

Mary E. Curtis and John R. Kruidenier

### [Alphabetics: Phonemic Awareness Training and Phonics Instruction](#)

from *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers*  
by Susan McShane

### [The Vowel Sound Teacher](#) and [The Adult Phonics Teacher](#)

## Print Resources for Teaching Reading

### [Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers](#)

by Susan McShane

National Institute for Literacy, 2005

### [Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction](#)

by John Kruidenier

National Institute for Literacy, 2002

**Both books can be ordered, for free, from [edpubs.ed.gov](http://edpubs.ed.gov)**

abound online and in print. The list on this page will help trainers of nonprofit organizations devise a curriculum for their workshops and in-services that incorporates alphabetics. ■■

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*Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is Literacy Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.*

# Reading Characteristics of GED-Level Learners

(continued from page 5)

tack standard scores (mean = 94, *SD* = 5.9) in the low-average/average range; Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test standard scores (mean = 87, *SD* = 7.4) in the moderately low/ low- average range; and Weschler Adult Intelligence Scales Digit Span scaled scores (mean = 7.7, *SD* = 1.8) in the low-average range. Further, these eleven read, on average, 154 words per minute (*SD* = 25), compared to the

*Adult literacy learners who achieve proficiency across all of the component areas of reading experience “dramatic improvements in many aspects of life.”*

optimal reading rate of U.S. adults and college students of about 200–250 words per minute (Harris & Sipay, 1990).

Perhaps in the job market of 100 years ago, literacy gaps such as those described above would not have impeded these GED-level learners from competing for above-entry-level work. However, in the fiercely competitive and increasingly technical world of work today, these gaps matter a great deal. Strucker, Yamamoto, and Kirsch (2007) argued that adult literacy learners who achieve proficiency across all of the component areas of reading experience “dramatic improvements in many aspects of life, including higher income and less unemployment, increased access to lifelong learning, greater amounts of personal reading for pleasure, and increased civic participation” (p. 3).

The implications for reading assessment and instruction at the component level is clear. Strucker, Yamamoto and Kirsch (2007) again argue:

*At the present time, many adult literacy teachers in the U.S. tend to offer [adult literacy learners] instruction*

*that is primarily organized around reading comprehension strategies, such as finding the main idea, using inferences, and detecting the sequence, and techniques for learning vocabulary through context. The teachers may be unaware of their students’ underlying needs in [component areas of reading such as decoding, vocabulary, and fluency] or they may believe that these component skills will develop naturally in the course of reading connected texts.*

*Our findings suggest that a different approach should be explored for these...adults, such as the approach developed by Chall in the Harvard Adult Reading Laboratory (Chall, 1994) and later extended and adapted for adolescent group instruction at Boys and Girls Town in Nebraska by Curtis (Curtis & Longo, 1999). Instead of focusing primarily on comprehension itself, Chall and Curtis’ approach addresses the root causes of poor comprehension: lack of*

*fluent, accurate word recognition and limited knowledge of word meanings. Direct instruction is provided in each of these areas, accompanied by extensive reading and discussion of complete texts at appropriate levels of challenge.* (p. 29)

Our Fast Track GED programs should be congratulated for the way they have inspired and encouraged many adult literacy learners to return to school and earn their GED credential. However, U.S. policy makers and literacy practitioners need to find ways to extend this support to literacy learners—including those “at the top” of the class—who continue to have gaps in one or more component area of reading. Without this support, these learners may not realize the greatest benefit of the GED credential—access to higher learning and meaningful work. ■

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# How Is Adult ESOL Reading Instruction Different from ABE Reading Instruction? (continued from page 5)

trying to achieve reading fluency. This difference arises due to interference from ELLs' native languages, which may affect many elements of fluent reading, from letter-sound relationships to stress and intonation.

The chart below was compiled by Lauren Lang, a Virginia ESOL trainer,

for use in an in-depth workshop, Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners. The chart summarizes the components of reading as well as appropriate and inappropriate strategies for teaching reading to ELLs. The entire *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?* brief can be

viewed online and downloaded from the CAELA website at: <http://www.cal.org/caela/esl%5Fresources/briefs/readingdif.html>

Nancy Faux is ESOL Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

## Summary of Appropriate Strategies for Teaching Reading in ESOL\*

Reading Components	Inappropriate Strategies for ESOL	Reasons Strategies are Inappropriate	Suggested Strategies for ESOL
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grouping words in semantic sets, such as colors and antonym pairs, e.g., hot/cold</li> <li>Using context clues to figure out the meaning of a word</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners are likely to confuse the words.</li> <li>Learners must know 95% of words in a passage to benefit from context clues. Non-native speakers' English vocabulary banks are much smaller than those of native English speakers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group new vocabulary around looser themes, e.g., going out to eat.</li> <li>Teach high frequency words first, e.g., <i>red</i> before <i>orange</i>.</li> <li>Pre-teach vocabulary in a reading passage.</li> </ul>
<b>Alphabetsics / Word Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using nonsense words to teach sound/symbol correspondences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-native English speakers don't have the vocabulary base in either written or <i>oral</i> expression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach English letter-sound correspondences to all learners.</li> </ul>
<b>Fluency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive oral reading</li> <li>Choral reading (unless short and focused with a native-speaker-like model of the reading before attempts by learners, e.g., Jazz Chants)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English language learners' accuracy in oral reading may be complicated by native language interference affecting, for example, letter-sound relationships, stress, intonation, and pauses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make limited use of choral reading, choosing short segments that emphasize English stress and intonation.</li> <li>Learners need to hear a native-speaker-like model of the reading before attempting choral reading.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing learner comprehension without pre-teaching vocabulary, previewing cultural contexts, and discussing the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural issues may impede comprehension.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initially, select topics familiar to students.</li> <li>Pre-teach vocabulary.</li> <li>Preview unfamiliar ideas with students.</li> <li>Use visual aids and physical objects to help learners build background knowledge.</li> </ul>

\*Table was created by Lauren Lang for Teaching Reading to Adult English Language Learners workshop

## The Resource Center Welcomes New Staff



The Resource Center is pleased to welcome three new members to our staff this fall. As Registration and Support Coordinator, **Page Stirrup** (far left) manages training registration and is the first point of contact at the Resource Center for questions about trainings and events. Page's prior experience includes serving

as a program support technician for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College's Tutoring Centers and working with training programs through VCU's Schools of Social Work and Education.

**Katie Bratisax** (center), Assistant Instructional Technology Specialist, maintains and updates the Resource Center website. Katie returns to Virginia after living for ten years in Atlanta, Georgia, where she worked for Cox Interactive Media and Cartoon Network.

Instructional Specialist **Kate Daly** (far right) works with both ESOL and ABE/GED programs around the state to provide support in the areas of professional development, assessment, and instructional resources. She is also a recently returned Virginian, having spent the last ten years in Arizona, where she taught ESL and worked on several projects along the U.S./Mexico border.