

# STEPS FOR FACILITATING SESSION ONE

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

- Generate research questions or problems
- Outline the steps for conducting research
- Explain the component skills of reading and strategies for teaching them
- List sources of data and/or how to collect data
- Name hindrances to and supports for conducting research

**Time:** 1½ days (10 hours) (If you plan to hold this session in one day, you may want to skip Step 4.)

## Preparation:



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

- \_\_\_ Purposes of the Practitioner Research Training
- \_\_\_ Session One Objectives
- \_\_\_ Session One Agenda
- \_\_\_ Research Is Useless
- \_\_\_ Research Can Be Useful
- \_\_\_ Research Is Useful
- \_\_\_ The Skills of Reading (Kruidenier Executive Summary)
- \_\_\_ The Practices of Reading (Purcell-Gates Article)
- \_\_\_ Dialogue Journal Writing Prompt
- \_\_\_ Discussion Questions
- \_\_\_ Framing Research Questions

- \_\_\_ Goal: Working on and Successfully Completing Your Research Projects
- \_\_\_ Useful/How to Improve



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

- \_\_\_ Session One Agenda [*revise* as needed]
- \_\_\_ Reflective Practitioners
- \_\_\_ Road Map for Practitioner Research
- \_\_\_ Project Timeline [*revise* as needed]
- \_\_\_ Teaching Adults to Read
- \_\_\_ Jigsaw Activity: Alphabetics
- \_\_\_ Jigsaw Activity: Fluency
- \_\_\_ Jigsaw Activity: Vocabulary
- \_\_\_ Jigsaw Activity: Comprehension
- \_\_\_ Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question
- \_\_\_ Critical Friends
- \_\_\_ Quantitative and Qualitative Research
- \_\_\_ The Language of Research
- \_\_\_ Ways to Collect Data
- \_\_\_ To Do Before Session Two

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



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

- \_\_\_ Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief
- \_\_\_ Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles: An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners
- \_\_\_ EFF Hot Topics: Read With Understanding

- \_\_\_ Comprehension Strategy Instruction
- \_\_\_ *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers*
- \_\_\_ *Overview of Understanding What Reading Is All About: Teaching Materials and Lesson Plans for Adult Basic Education Learners*
- \_\_\_ List of Reading-related Web Sites

### MATERIALS

- \_\_\_ strips of newsprint (two per person)
- \_\_\_ pencils and blank paper (8 ½" x 11") (one per person)
- \_\_\_ new pennies (one per person)
- \_\_\_ colored slips of paper (or slips with a, b, c, or d)
- \_\_\_ assortment of colored sticky notes (one color per person)
- \_\_\_ blank newsprint sheets
- \_\_\_ newsprint easel
- \_\_\_ markers, pens, tape

### STEPS:

#### 1. WELCOME TO DAY ONE AND INTRODUCTIONS (20 MINUTES)

---

- **Welcome participants** to the first session of the practitioner research training.
- **Introduce yourself** and state your role as facilitator of the training. Explain how you came to facilitate this training and who is sponsoring it.
- **Ask the participants to introduce themselves briefly** (name, program, role) and to say whether they have ever participated in practitioner research before.
- **Make sure that participants know** where bathrooms are located, when the session will end, when the breaks and lunch will be, and any other “housekeeping” information.

#### Note to Facilitator

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

**2. OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA**

(10 MINUTES)

- **Post the newspaper** Purposes of the Practitioner Research Training and review the purposes with participants.

**Purposes of the Practitioner Research Training**

1. To help practitioners read, discuss, and use reading research to improve their practice.
2. To help participants understand and be prepared to conduct practitioner research

-  **Post the newspapers** Session One Objectives and Session One Agenda **and distribute the handout** *Session One Agenda*. Ask the participants if these objectives and the agenda meet their expectations.

**Session One Objectives**

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

- Generate research questions or problems
- Outline the steps for conducting research
- Explain the component skills of reading and strategies for teaching them
- List sources of data and/or how to collect data
- Name hindrances to and supports for conducting research

### Session One Agenda

1. Welcome to Day One and Introductions (Done!)
2. Objectives and Agenda (Doing)
3. What You Want to Know About Reading Instruction
4. Teachers and Research
5. Guiding Principles: The Penny Activity
6. Practitioner Research Road Map and Project Timeline
7. Understanding the Research on Reading
8. Welcome to Day Two and Agenda Review
9. Jigsaw Activity: Activities to Teach the Components of Reading
10. Other Resources and Research on Reading: Homework
11. Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question
12. Developing Your Research Question: Sharing With a "Critical Friend"
13. What Is Data?
14. Strategizing Supports and Hindrances
15. Supporting Each Other
16. Evaluation of the Session

### 3. WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT READING INSTRUCTION

(30 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purposes of this activity are to help participants state an area of reading instruction that is unclear to them and then to use their statement as an example of "walking through" the phases of the research process.**
- **Invite the participants to find a partner.** Ask them to take five minutes each to talk about what they want to know about teaching reading. For example, they can discuss a problem in their reading instructional practice that they would like to explore through a practitioner research project, considering what evidence that they have that this is a problem and what they suspect is causing the problem.

This problem may be something that has continually challenged, frustrated, or puzzled them; it may be

something related to teaching or learning—to them as teachers or to their students.

- **Give participants strips of newsprint and markers.** Ask them each to write on their strip (in large letters) a phrase which describes the major concern, problem, or issue that they want to know about related to reading instruction.
- **Reconvene the whole group and ask the participants** to post their strips. Invite everyone to read silently through them. Then take a few minutes to allow participants to ask clarifying questions of any phrasing that is unclear.
- **Divide the whole group into smaller groups** of four or five participants. Ask each small group to categorize the concerns, problems, or issues in any way that makes sense to the group. Tell them to write their categories on newsprint.
- **Reconvene the whole group** and ask the small groups to post their newsprints. Invite everyone to read the categories. Then ask the entire group to summarize (look for overlapping categories, etc.) the lists. Ask the group to consider the following questions:
  - ? Based on these categories, what would you say we found out about our concerns as a group of adult basic education practitioners? How would you summarize what we found?
  - ? Based on these findings, what would you conclude about what we face as reading instructors? What does this mean for our training and our practitioner research?
- **Point out to the participants** that they have just experienced a mini, and rough, version of the practitioner research process:
  - collecting data (stating concerns as individuals within a group)
  - analyzing data (creating categories within the data)
  - making findings and conclusions (summarizing what was found and what this means about them and for them).

**4. TEACHERS AND RESEARCH**

(30 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to help them become aware of the various ways teachers approach research and to consider their own thinking about research.
- **Explain** that they are going to take part in a “live Likert scale” to see how their understanding of the usefulness of research matches those of teachers in research conducted by John Zeuli.
- **Post the three newsprints** Research Is Useless, Research Can Be Useful, and Research Is Useful in different parts of the room.

**Research Is Useless**

Research is useless; it should have a direct impact on practice, but it doesn't because it isn't relevant to my classroom.

**Research Can Be Useful**

Research can be useful; it should have a direct impact on practice, and it does if it provides practical suggestions and strategies.

**Research Is Useful**

Research is useful; it shouldn't necessarily have a direct impact on practice, rather it should expand my understanding of teaching.

- **Ask the participants to move** to the newsprint that most closely matches their beliefs about research and practice. They can stand between newsprints if that is where they are more comfortable.
- **Ask two or three participants** in each group to discuss why they chose that location. Tell participants that, if they change their mind after listening to the explanations, they may move to stand near another sign reflecting their opinion.

-  Distribute the handout *Reflective Practitioners*. Explain that these three categories are based on NCSALL researchers' experience with connecting research and practice. Invite the participants to take a few minutes, silently, to read through the handout and to consider where they might fit. Explain that, while all these approaches are effective, in this practitioner research project they will be "producers" of research.

### Break (15 minutes)

## 5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES: THE PENNY ACTIVITY<sup>3</sup> (30 MINUTES)

---

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to introduce some of the key principles that guide practitioner research. Using a penny, the activity provides a metaphor for better understanding the practitioner research process.
- **Distribute blank paper and a pencil** to each participant. Ask everyone to think about a penny. Point out that most of us still encounter pennies everyday and probably carry several of them. Tell participants to take 10 minutes to draw both sides of a penny from memory, including as much detail as possible.
- **After participants have finished drawing, ask** for a few volunteers to share their sketches and discuss the process they went through. Ask the volunteers the following questions:
  - ? How do you think you did with your drawings?
  - ? Were you able to remember all the details?
  - ? Do you feel like the penny you drew matches reality?

---

<sup>3</sup> The Penny Activity: Transcribed by Cassie Drennon, Georgia Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Group, 1998. Based on an original activity developed by Sandy Harrill, Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, 1998. ([www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meeting1/session2/index.htm](http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meeting1/session2/index.htm))

Then, ask the group: What are some reasons the reality of a penny and the drawings don't match? Possible answers (and some key messages) include:

- **We drew the penny based on faulty memory.**
- **We take pennies for granted because we're around them all the time.**
- **We assume we know.**
- **We haven't had a pressing need, or opportunity, to examine a penny with the care needed to remember more details.**
- **Now pass around the real pennies.** Ask participants to compare their drawings to the pennies. Invite comments from the group. Then ask everyone to think of the penny as absolute reality and their drawing as an interpretation. Ask the participants the following questions:
  - ? How do your drawings and the real pennies compare?
  - ? If you think back to the metaphor of the penny as the issue or concern you listed, what lesson(s) might you draw from this? Or what lesson(s) might you apply?

Possible answers include:

- Our memories are unreliable. We need to find other means to remember.
- We make assumptions; therefore, it's important to acknowledge that assumptions exist. And it's important to test the accuracy of our assumptions.
- **Close by explaining** to participants that in this activity they looked more closely at one example of a familiar reality (a penny) and that they will do that in their own research. As they carry out their research, they will be looking more closely at familiar situations. They need to focus on being reflective practitioners.

## 6. PRACTITIONER RESEARCH ROAD MAP<sup>4</sup> AND PROJECT TIMELINE

(15 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to gain a basic understanding of the steps in practitioner research, the activities involved, and when they will occur in the course of the project. Now that participants have become acquainted, they will become familiar with the main components of the research process, some of the activities entailed, and when they are expected to occur.
-  **Distribute the handout** *Road Map for Practitioner Research*. Invite the participants to take a few minutes to read the handout. Then ask for questions and comments. Point out to the participants that, although conducting research is a step-by-step process, it is not always as neat or linear as it is depicted on the handout. They should expect certain steps in the research process to overlap, occur simultaneously, and/or repeat themselves. Research is not cut and dried; the process can be messy and ambiguous at times.
-  **Distribute the handout** *Project Timeline*. Talk through the outline of activities for the training and at home, from beginning to end. Briefly discuss each of the major stages/parts of the research process with the group. Remind them that the research process is not always as neat or as linear as it might appear on the timeline. Ask the participants for questions and comments.

---

<sup>4</sup> Based on handouts and ideas from Joan Cohen-Mitchell and the NCSALL Practitioner Research Group on Learner Motivation, Retention and Persistence, 1998, and Cassie Drennon, *A Facilitation Guide for Local Adult Literacy Programs*, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia, 1998. ([www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meeting1/session1/index.htm](http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meeting1/session1/index.htm))

## 7. UNDERSTANDING THE RESEARCH ON READING (60 MINUTES)

---

- **Explain to participants** that the first step on the road map is to learn more about the topic so that they can begin to define their questions as practitioner researchers.
- **Provide the participants with an overview of the research on reading:**

Learning to read is learning the skills, but reading is a practice that happens within a context (worker, family member, community member) so learners' goals and contexts are equally important.

In this training, two major issues are discussed:

1. What does the research say about how to teach the skills of reading?
  2. What does the research say about the importance of learners' goals, contexts, and practices of reading?
-  **Ask the participants to find the copies of the readings** that were sent to them before the first session: *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction: Executive Summary* and *Taking Literacy Skills Home*.
  - **Post the newsprints** The Skills of Reading (Kruidenier Executive Summary) and The Practices of Reading (Purcell-Gates Article). Read the questions.

**The Skills of Reading (Kruidenier Executive Summary)**

- What do you think about the importance of the four components of reading?
- What information does this summary provide about how to improve adult students' skills?

**The Practices of Reading (Purcell-Gates Article)**

- What do you think about the importance of increasing adults' use of literacy in their daily lives?
- What information does this article provide about how to increase adults' use of literacy?

- **Invite the participants to form two groups.** Tell them to take 15 minutes to discuss the questions for each article.
- **Post the newspaper Dialogue Journal Writing Prompt.**

**Dialogue Journal Writing Prompt**

After what I've learned today about teaching reading, I'm wondering....

- **Explain to participants that to conclude this activity, they will engage in a short reflection activity, called "dialogue journal writing."** Ask the participants to take five minutes, quietly and silently, to write a response to the prompt. Ask them to put their names on the papers, explaining that they will share what they write with one other person, not the whole group.
- **After participants write for five minutes, ask them to place their writings** on a chair in the center of the group. Then, after all the writings are on the chair, invite them to select another person's paper.
- **Ask the participants to read the other person's paper,** take five minutes to write a response, and then return the paper to the original writer.
- **Reconvene the whole group** and ask one or two participants to share what they learned.
- **Close the first day by checking in** with the participants on how they are doing and answering any questions.

---

**8. WELCOME TO DAY TWO AND AGENDA REVIEW (5 MINUTES)**


---

- **Welcome participants** to the second day of the first session. Review the agenda, highlighting the remaining activities.

---

**9. JIGSAW ACTIVITY: ACTIVITIES TO TEACH THE COMPONENTS OF READING (100 MINUTES)**


---

- **Explain to participants that the second step on the road map is to develop a research question.** The questions will be in the form of “What happens when I do X?” In order to form a question, participants need to think about strategies for teaching. One aspect they will consider is using authentic materials and contextualized instruction based on the literacy practices of learners’ day-to-day lives. The other aspect is direct instruction in the skills of reading. This activity focuses on some activities for directly teaching the skills of reading, as a way to think about strategies that might be tried in the classroom as part of the practitioner research project.
- **Ask the participants to count off** by 4’s and form “learning groups.”
-  **Distribute the handout** *Teaching Adults to Read*. Also, distribute to each learning group the handouts *Jigsaw Activity*, which outline the steps for conducting the activity. Each group receives a different skill (*Alphabetics* to one group, *Vocabulary* to another group, and so on).
- Ask the groups to take 15 minutes first to read both the section in *Teaching Adults to Read* for their component skill and the Jigsaw activity description, then to discuss the skill as a group. Group members will teach this topic to the others in their “teaching group” in the next part of this activity.
- **While the participants are still in their “learning groups,” form the “teaching groups” by distributing a different colored slip of paper** (or a slip with a, b, c, or d on it) to each person in the learning groups.

- **Ask the participants to move to their “teaching groups” based on the color of the slip of paper they received or the letter** written on it (a, b, c, or d). In each teaching group, there is a person who knows about one of the reading skills. Each person in the teaching group will know about a different skill and have a different activity to teach. In round robin format, invite participants to take 15 minutes each to give an overview of the reading skill they learned about and then to teach the skill by using the steps they learned. The facilitator should carefully monitor the time, making sure that the next “teacher” starts on time.
- **Reconvene the whole group.** Discuss each jigsaw activity, and answer questions about the component skills.
- **Post the newsprint Discussion Questions** and facilitate a discussion using the following questions:

**Discussion Questions**

- How would you adapt each of these activities to different learner populations: ESOL learners, pre-GED and GED learners, and so on?
- What information do you need to know about learners in order to teach the component skills?
- What else is involved in reading besides the skills? (students goals, literacy practices, life contexts)
- If you base reading instruction around students’ goals, literacy practices, and life contexts, how can you also be sure students learn reading skills? What are some strategies for doing this?

### Break (15 minutes)

## 10. OTHER RESOURCES AND RESEARCH ON READING: HOMEWORK

(25 MINUTES)

---

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to explore some other research on reading. Participants can read the research before the next session, considering it in terms of forming their research questions.

- **Post the questions that the group generated in the third step, “What you want to know about reading instruction.”** Ask the group to state which of their questions have been answered and which are still unanswered. Explain to participants that you’re giving them some other research-related materials and resources for finding answers to their questions. Point out that research probably can’t answer all their questions.
-  **Distribute the readings on the other research and resources.** Provide an overview of each reading as it is distributed:
  - The *Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief* describes the research conducted by John Strucker with almost 1000 adult learners. The goal of the research was to assess the learners’ component reading skills and to develop categories of adult learners, based on their reading profiles. The ARCS study will be discussed further in the next session.
  - **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles: An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners** introduces the Web site designed by Rosalind Davidson to help adult basic education teachers develop reading profiles of their learners. The profiles are based on assessments of the reading components skills.
  - **EFF Hot Topics: Read With Understanding** was developed by the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Training Center to help teachers who are interested in using the EFF framework to understand the research on reading within the EFF framework.
  - **Comprehension Strategy Instruction** provides more information about strategies for helping learners improve their reading comprehension skills.
  - *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers* was developed by NIFL to build adult literacy instructors’ knowledge of

- scientifically based reading research and provide basic guidance on how to use it in the classroom.
- **Overview of *Understanding What Reading Is All About: Teaching Materials and Lesson Plans for Adult Basic Education Learners*** previews the teaching materials, *Understanding What Reading is All About*, designed by NCSALL. The handbook has lessons plans that adult basic education teachers can use to help adult learners understand the reading skills and the process of learning to read, and develop goals for reading and for improving their skills.
  - The **List of Reading-related Web Sites** provides other sources of reading research.
  - **Invite the participants to take 10 minutes to review these resources on reading.** Explain that these resources will be discussed more at the next session. Specifically, as homework for the second session, ask them to learn more about their reading problem or concern by reading and/or visiting the following:
    - ***Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief***
    - **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles: An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners**
    - **EFF Hot Topics: Read With Understanding**
    - **Comprehension Strategy Instruction**
    - ***Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers***
    - **Overview of *Understanding What Reading Is All About: Teaching Materials and Lesson Plans for Adult Basic Education Learners***
    - Web sites on **List of Reading-related Web Sites**
  - **Ask the participants to be ready with one question or one comment** about the research or other resources they read

as they sought information about the intervention, strategy, technique, or change in reading instruction that they plan to make as part of their practitioner research.

## 11. REFLECTING ON A PROBLEM TO DEVELOP YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION

(20 MINUTES)

---

- **Explain to participants that the** purpose of this activity is to begin to focus on their particular research question through reflecting on a problem.
-  **Distribute the handout** *Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question*. Ask the participants to think about reading instruction and/or their students' reading practices as they answer the questions on the handout. Explain that the responses for this individual reflection will be used in the next activity when they develop a research question.

## 12. DEVELOPING YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION: SHARING WITH A "CRITICAL FRIEND"

(60MINUTES)

---

- **Explain to participants that the** first step on the road map was to learn more about the topic so that they could begin to define their questions as practitioner researchers.
- **Post the newsprint** Framing Research Questions. Explain to the participants that in this activity they will begin to develop their research questions. Distribute markers and newsprint and ask the participants to write to the following prompts:

**Framing Research Questions**

- A sentence or two summarizing my research problem or issue
- A concise statement about what difference it will make when I solve or better understand my research problem
- A draft research question in the form of

**“What happens to \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., students’ comprehension skills, motivation to read, vocabulary skills, literacy practices outside of class, etc.) when I \_\_\_\_\_ (do X; e.g., teach comprehension strategies, use students’ authentic materials for instruction, give students fluency practice, etc.) in class?”**

- **Invite the participants to choose a partner** as their “critical friend.”
-  **Distribute the handout *Critical Friends*.** Ask the pairs to read each other’s statement of a possible research problem and then to take 10 minutes each to give feedback, according to the “critical friend” guidelines. After the feedback, ask them to re-write their research questions (if necessary) on strips of newsprint.
- **Invite the participants to post their research questions.** As in a gallery review, ask the participants to walk around the room and read the newsprints. Tell participants to use sticky notes to post comments and/or questions on the borders, or in the white space, of the newsprint for each person. Encourage participants to start their comments with “I wonder...”
- **Reconvene the whole group and discuss the research questions.** This is an opportunity to discuss the participants’ research projects in a relaxed, social setting.

**Note to Facilitator**  
 You should also participate in the gallery review and post comments and/or questions for each participant.

**Lunch (60 minutes)**

**13. WHAT IS DATA?**

(30 MINUTES)

- Refer to the handout *Road Map for Practitioner Research*. In order to answer their research questions, the participants will need information—called data in research. This activity will help them understand the types of data that they can collect and use.
- **Ask the group to brainstorm the answers to the question:**
  - ? If you wanted to know where your students are (*what their skills and practices are*) as readers, what are some ways that you could find that out?

Write the answers on newsprint. (Answers might include: tests, student work in portfolios, watch them, listen to them read out loud, interview them about their practices and reading goals, ask them about their reading demands of daily life, etc.). Point out to participants that all of this is data.

-  **Distribute the following handouts:**
  - *Quantitative and Qualitative Research*
  - *The Language of Research*
  - *Ways to Collect Data*

Review the handouts, asking for questions and/or comments.

-  **Distribute the handout *To Do Before Session Two*.** Explain the homework for Session Two. Ask the participants to read the handout, encouraging them to ask questions and clarify their tasks. Remind them of what they should bring to the next session—baseline data or information related to their research question.

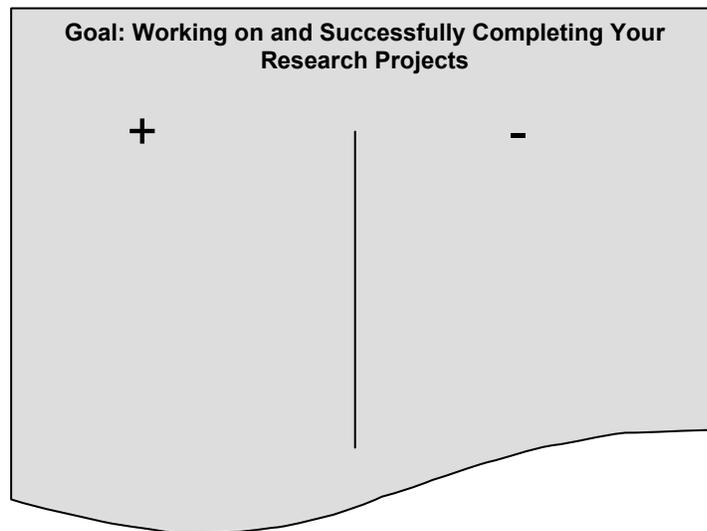
**14. STRATEGIZING SUPPORTS AND HINDRANCES**

(20 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of the next activity is to help them identify the forces that may hinder

or support their practitioner research efforts. Building in new activities to their current jobs and teaching is never easy because there are existing forces that may hinder them in their efforts. But there are also likely to be forces that support them as they work on their own back in their classrooms and programs. This activity will help them discuss those supporting and hindering forces, and strategize on how to strengthen supportive and reduce hindering forces in order to successfully complete their research projects.

- **Post the newsprint** Goal: Working on and Successfully Completing Your Research Projects. Explain to participants that the next activity is called a “force field analysis.” It will help them to brainstorm and strategize about those factors that would support and hinder them in completing their research projects.



- **Ask the group to brainstorm** the constraints (factors that hinder) they will face in their programs, jobs, or classrooms when taking the next steps for conducting their research projects. These may be limited time, required curriculum, and lack of support from program director. Write, exactly as said, each constraint mentioned on the right side of the newsprint. Take no more than five minutes to list constraints.

- **Then ask the group to brainstorm** all of the supports (factors that help) for taking their next steps. These may be support from colleagues and interest of the students. Write these on the left side of the newsprint under the “plus” sign.
- **Lead a discussion** with the whole group about how constraining forces could be reduced and how supporting forces could be increased.

### Break (15 minutes)

## 15. SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

(55 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to learn more about each other’s situations so that members of the group can support one another. In order to help each other think through strategies and approaches to reading instruction, it will be helpful to know about each other’s situations.
- **Invite the group to brainstorm a list of questions** that they might like answered to learn about each other’s classes and reading instruction in order to be a support. Write these questions on newsprint.
- **Facilitate a discussion** on the list and reach agreement on the final questions. Write each of the final questions on strips of newsprint and post the strips along the wall.
- **Distribute a different color of sticky notes** to each person. Ask the participants to write their answers to the questions on the sticky notes and post them under the corresponding questions on the wall. Ask them to write their name on one of the sticky notes. Tell them that this information will be typed up and distributed to everyone.
- **Point out to the group** that the questions they have posed and answered are a kind of baseline data about the context of their research.
- **Explain to participants** how they will contact each other and the facilitator over the next six months: group e-mail list, telephone numbers, etc. Remind participants that they

should write to each other and/or the facilitator to ask questions, share ideas, solve problems, get advice, and so on.

- **Suggest that as a beginning** for these conversations, each person send a “dialogue journal” e-mail message to the next person alphabetically on the list, responding to the prompt “When I think about this practitioner research, I wonder ...”

## 16. EVALUATION OF THE SESSION

(15 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that, in the time left, you would like to get feedback from them about this first session.
- **Post the newsprint** Useful/How to Improve.

Useful	How to Improve

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

- **Then ask participants for suggestions on how to improve this design.** Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “How to Improve.” If anyone makes a negative comment that’s not in the form of a suggestion, ask the person to rephrase it as a suggestion for improvement, and then write the suggestion on the newsprint.
- **Do not make any response to participants’ comments during this evaluation.** It is *very* important that you do not defend or justify anything you have done in the training or anything about the design, as this will discourage further suggestions. If anyone makes a suggestion you don’t agree

with, just nod your head. If you feel some response is needed, rephrase their concern: “So you feel that what we should do instead of the small group discussion is ...? Is that right?”

- **Thank everyone** for coming and participating in the training.
- **Remind participants** to complete the homework.
- **Repeat the date, time, and place for the next session.** If applicable, explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next session in the event of bad weather.



<b>Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One</b>	
<b>1. Welcome to Day One and Introductions</b>	<i>20 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone introduces themselves.</li> <li>• Housekeeping and logistics.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Objectives and Agenda</b>	<i>10 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post the newspapers <u>Purposes of the Practitioner Research Training, Session One Objectives</u>, and <u>Session One Agenda</u>.</li> <li>• Distribute handout <i>Session One Agenda</i>; review.</li> </ul>	
<b>3. What You Want to Know About Reading Instruction</b>	<i>30 mins., PAIRS, then WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss a problem in reading instructional practice with partner</li> <li>• Write concern/problem on strips of newsprint.</li> <li>• Summarize and identify categories of problems/concerns.</li> <li>• Note how just experienced research process.</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Teachers and Research</b>	<i>30 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post the newspapers (<u>Research Is Useless</u>, <u>Research Can Be Useful</u>, and <u>Research Is Useful</u>) around the room; ask participants to move to the newsprint that matches their beliefs about research and practice.</li> <li>• Ask a few to discuss why they chose their location.</li> <li>• Distribute handout <i>Reflective Practitioners</i>.</li> </ul>	
<b>15-Minute Break</b>	
<b>5. Guiding Principles: The Penny Activity</b>	<i>30 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute blank paper and pencils; ask to draw both sides of penny.</li> <li>• Share sketches and discuss process. Whole group discussion:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? What are some reasons the reality of a penny and the drawings don't match?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pass around real pennies; compare drawings to pennies. Whole group discussion:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? If you think back to the metaphor of the penny as the issue or concern you listed, what lesson(s) might you draw from this? Or what lesson(s) might you apply?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<b>Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One</b>	
<b>6. Practitioner Research Road Map and Project Timeline</b>	<i>15 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the handout <i>Road Map for Practitioner Research</i>; review.</li> <li>• Distribute the handout <i>Project Timeline</i>; review.</li> </ul>	
<b>7. Understanding the Research on Reading</b>	<i>60 mins., WHOLE GROUP, then SMALL GROUPS, then INDIVIDUALS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview of the research on reading.</li> <li>• Post the newspapers <u>The Skills of Reading</u> and <u>The Practices of Reading</u>; small groups discuss questions.</li> <li>• Post the newspaper <u>Dialogue Journal Writing Prompt</u>; individuals write own response, then respond to another’s journal.</li> <li>• Check in with participants to close first day.</li> </ul>	
<b>8. Welcome to Day Two and Agenda Review</b>	<i>5 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review agenda for second day.</li> </ul>	
<b>9. Jigsaw Activity: Activities to Teach the Components of Reading</b>	<i>100 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Count off by 4’s to form “learning groups.”</li> <li>• Distribute the handouts <i>Teaching Adults to Read</i> and <i>Jigsaw Activity</i> (each group gets different component skill—<i>Alphabetics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension</i>).</li> <li>• Form “teaching groups”; participants teach component skills.</li> <li>• Discuss each jigsaw activity.</li> <li>• Post newspaper <u>Discussion Questions</u>; lead discussion on questions.</li> </ul>	
<b>15–Minute Break</b>	

## Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One

<b>10. Other Resources and Research on Reading: Homework</b>	<i>25 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post the questions from the third step; share that there will be other resources.</li> <li>• Distribute the readings for homework for Session Two; provide brief overview of each.</li> </ul>	
<b>11. Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question</b>	<i>20 mins., INDIVIDUALS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the handout <i>Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question</i>; participants respond individually to the questions.</li> </ul>	
<b>12. Developing Your Research Question: Sharing With a “Critical Friend”</b>	<i>60 mins., PAIRS, then WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post newsprint <u>Framing Research Questions</u>; form pairs.</li> <li>• Distribute the handout <i>Critical Friends</i>; review.</li> <li>• Partners read each other’s statement of possible research problem and use handout to provide feedback; rewrite research questions on newsprint.</li> <li>• Gallery walk; whole group discussion of proposed research projects.</li> </ul>	
<b>60–Minute Lunch</b>	
<b>13. What Is Data?</b>	<i>30 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm and list:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>?</b> If you wanted to know where your students are (what their skills and practices are) as readers, what are some ways that you could find that out?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Point out that this is data.</li> <li>• Distribute the handouts <i>Quantitative and Qualitative Research, The Language of Research, and Ways to Collect Data</i>; review.</li> <li>• Distribute the handout <i>To Do Before Session Two</i>; review.</li> </ul>	

<b>Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One</b>	
<b>14. Strategizing Supports and Hindrances</b>	<i>20 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post newsprint <u>Goal: Working on and Successfully Completing Your Research Projects.</u></li> <li>• Brainstorm and list constraints and supports to conducting research projects.</li> <li>• Strategize ways to increase supports and decrease constraints.</li> </ul>	
<b>15-Minute Break</b>	
<b>15. Supporting Each Other</b>	<i>55 mins., WHOLE GROUP, then INDIVIDUALS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm and list questions for knowing about each other's classes and reading instruction in order to support each other.</li> <li>• Whole group discussion on list; write final questions on strips of newsprint and post.</li> <li>• Individuals respond to questions on sticky notes (different color for each individual).</li> <li>• Discuss logistics for communicating over next six months; suggest prompt for dialogue journal via e-mail.</li> </ul>	
<b>16. Evaluation of the Session</b>	<i>15 mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post newsprint <u>Useful/How to Improve.</u></li> <li>• Remind participants of next session date, time, and location.</li> </ul>	

## Materials to Hand Out in Session One

### CONTENTS

#### Handouts for Session One

- Handout : *Session One Agenda*
  - Handout : *Reflective Practitioners*
  - Handout : *Road Map for Practitioner Research*
  - Handout : *Project Timeline*
  - Handout : *Teaching Adults to Read*
  - Handout : *Jigsaw Activity: Alphabetics*
  - Handout : *Jigsaw Activity: Fluency*
  - Handout : *Jigsaw Activity: Vocabulary*
  - Handout : *Jigsaw Activity: Comprehension*
  - Handout : *Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question*
  - Handout : *Critical Friends*
  - Handout : *Quantitative and Qualitative Research*
  - Handout : *The Language of Research*
  - Handout : *Ways to Collect Data*
  - Handout : *To Do Before Session Two*
-

Readings Assigned for Session Two

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

Reading : **Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles: An Interactive Website for Adult Education Practitioners**

Reading : **EFF Hot Topics: Read With Understanding**

Reading : **Comprehension Strategy Instruction**

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

Reading : *Overview of Understanding What Reading Is All About: Teaching Materials and Lesson Plans for Adult Basic Education Learners*

Reading : **List of Reading-related Web Sites**

---

## Session One Agenda

### DAY 1 (3½ HOURS)

- 20 minutes* 1. Welcome to Day One and Introductions
- 10 minutes* 2. Objectives and Agenda
- 30 minutes* 3. What You Want to Know About Reading Instruction
- 30 minutes* 4. Teachers and Research
- 15 minutes* **Break**
- 30 minutes* 5. Guiding Principles: The Penny Activity
- 15 minutes* 6. Practitioner Research Road Map and Project Timeline
- 60 minutes* 7. Understanding the Research on Reading

### DAY 2 (7 HOURS)

- 5 minutes* 8. Welcome to Day Two and Agenda Review
- 100 minutes* 9. Jigsaw Activity: Activities to Teach the Components of Reading
- 15 minutes* **Break**
- 25 minutes* 10. Other Resources and Research on Reading: Homework
- 20 minutes* 11. Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question
- 60 minutes* 12. Developing Your Research Question: Sharing With a “Critical Friend”
- 60 minutes* **Lunch**
- 30 minutes* 13. What Is Data?

*20 minutes* 14. Strategizing Supports and Hindrances

*15 minutes* **Break**

*55 minutes* 15. Supporting Each Other

*15 minutes* 16. Evaluation of the Session

## Reflective Practitioners

### QUESTIONERS

Teachers adopt a stance that evidence should underlie practice. Teachers ask, “Why should I use this technique or strategy and what is the evidence that supports it? Is it based on evidence I have about students’ performance, on other teachers’ evidence (professional wisdom), or on research evidence?”

### CONSUMERS

Teachers are “research consumers,” who not only access, understand, judge, and use new research findings but proactively seek research evidence. They adopt the attitude that new evidence is critical to their work; they integrate new knowledge of research with their own experience to make decisions and changes in their classrooms; and they also generate knowledge (professional wisdom) that can be shared with others about whether and how such evidence worked in their classrooms.

### PRODUCERS

Teachers are not only consumers, but also become researchers in their own classrooms. They add to the knowledge base in our field through classroom research or co-research with university-based researchers.



## Road Map for Practitioner Research

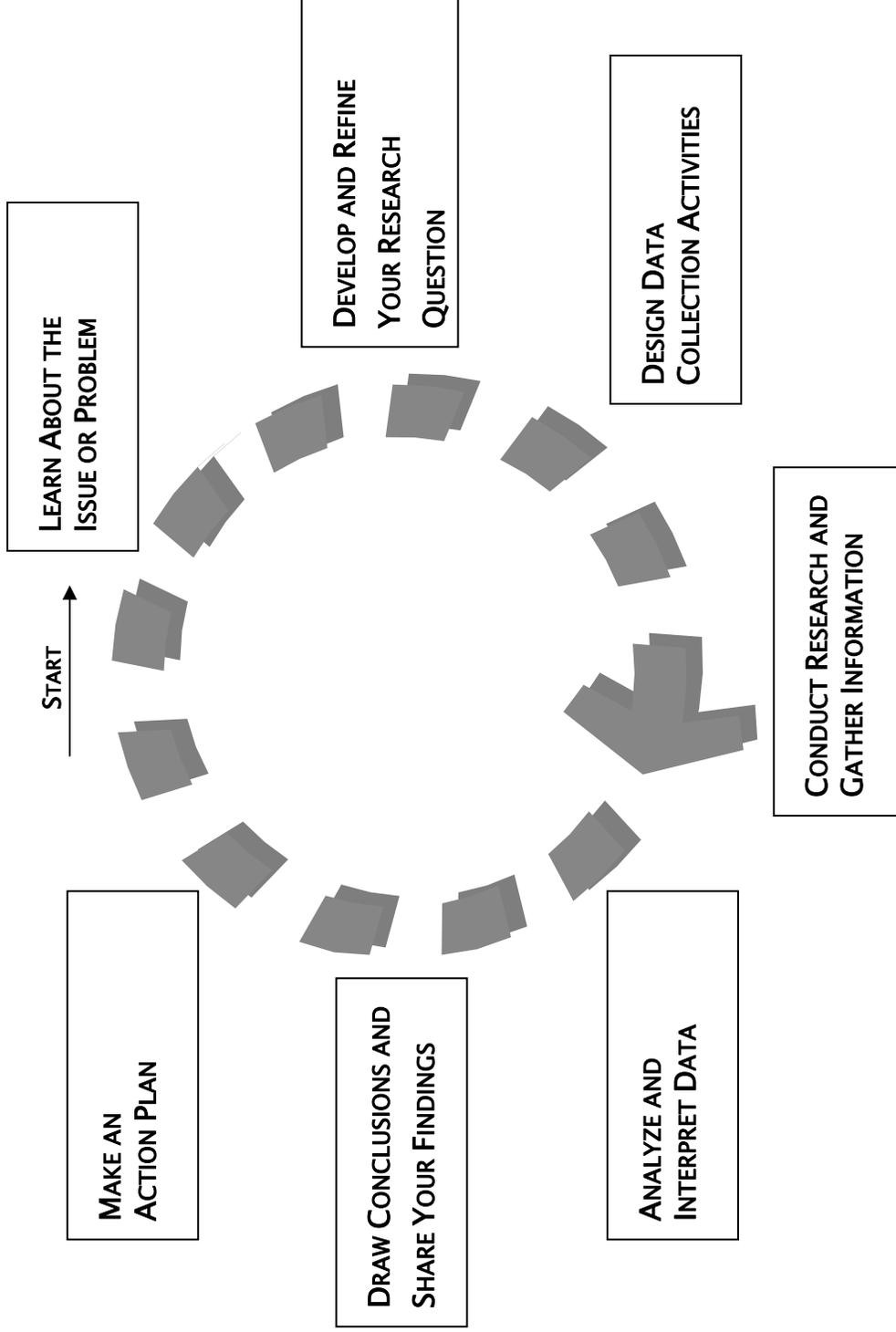
<p><b>LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUE OR PROBLEM</b></p>	<p>Read about, talk about, and think about an issue or problem that is important to you and the learners with whom you work. Identify possible problems to explore in your classroom or practice. Write a few paragraphs about the problem as you have experienced it in your situation and context.</p>
<p><b>DEVELOP AND REFINE YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION</b></p>	<p>Fine-tune the problem. Generate a research question: “What happens when I try...?” Research questions should be personal, focused, and finite enough to be investigated within the project’s time frame. Write a few paragraphs about your question and its importance.</p>
<p><b>DESIGN DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES</b></p>	<p>Think about what evidence or information you need to answer your question. Think about what method of data collection will give you that information. Consider the availability of resources and support and the project’s timeframe. Design your method for collecting data in your context. Common data collection methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student test scores, using either standardized or teacher-made tests</li> <li>• Student work, such as writings, assignments, etc.</li> <li>• Interviews with students, colleagues, and others</li> <li>• Observations of students working, learning, interacting, etc.</li> <li>• A researcher’s journal</li> </ul> <p>Write a few paragraphs about how you will conduct your research.</p>

RESEARCH-BASED ADULT READING INSTRUCTION

<p><b>CONDUCT RESEARCH AND GATHER INFORMATION</b></p>	<p>Conduct your project, systematically collecting data about the results. Read the data you have collected. Listen to and transcribe your tapes. Reflect on your progress and record your thoughts. Discuss the data with your students and colleagues. Read what other researchers and theorists have to say about your questions.</p>
<p><b>ANALYZE AND INTERPRET DATA</b></p>	<p>Read through all your data. After each passage, record a word or phrase that answers the question, "What is this about?" Organize your data into a few broad categories that make sense. Devise a coding scheme for your data according to categories and sub-categories. Code and sort your data. Decide what your data means. What are your impressions? What is your theory about the situation now that you have all the data before you? Seek feedback and the perspectives of others. Document this stage by writing notes about patterns, hunches, and puzzles. Be sure to not ignore the data that challenge your theory.</p>
<p><b>DRAW CONCLUSIONS AND SHARE YOUR FINDINGS</b></p>	<p>Draw conclusions about your study. Reflect on what you have learned: What are the implications of your research for your practice, for the people involved, and for the larger field? What is the significance of what you have discovered? Document this stage by writing about your findings and conclusions and the implications. Write up your entire project. Share the results with others through publication, presentations, and discussion groups.</p>
<p><b>MAKE AN ACTION PLAN</b></p>	<p>Think about what your findings mean for changing your practice. Think about what your next steps should be. Based on your discoveries, make plans for changing your practice and for further study and research. Implement your plans.</p>

\* Based on handouts and ideas from Joan Cohen-Mitchell and the NCSALL Practitioner Research Group on Learner Motivation, Retention and Persistence, 1998, and Cassie Drennon, A Facilitation Guide for Local Adult Literacy Programs, Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia, 1998. (From [www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meetings1/session3/index.htm](http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/meetings/meetings1/session3/index.htm))

## Road Map for Practitioner Research





## Project Timeline

### **SESSION ONE: IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND LEARNING ABOUT THE TOPIC**

Explore some of the key principles and steps in practitioner research. Learn about the research on reading and discuss instructional strategies that you can investigate in your classroom or practice.

#### **CONTINUING THE RESEARCH AT HOME**

Refine the research problem. Generate a research question that relates to the particular problem. Consider ways to answer the question through a classroom or program-based project.

### **SESSION TWO: COLLECTING RESEARCH DATA**

Learn about data collection methods. Decide on and design activities through which you will collect the information or evidence needed to answer your research question.

#### **CONTINUING THE RESEARCH AT HOME**

Conduct the research activities. Read the data you collect. Think and reflect about it in writing. Discuss your research with students and colleagues.

### **SESSION THREE: ANALYZING RESEARCH DATA**

Learn about tools and strategies for analyzing data. Begin to work with data. Develop a plan and a timeline to analyze and interpret data.

#### **CONTINUING THE RESEARCH AT HOME**

Analyze the data. Interpret the data. Draw conclusions. Decide what the data means. Write about the findings and conclusions and the implications for practice.

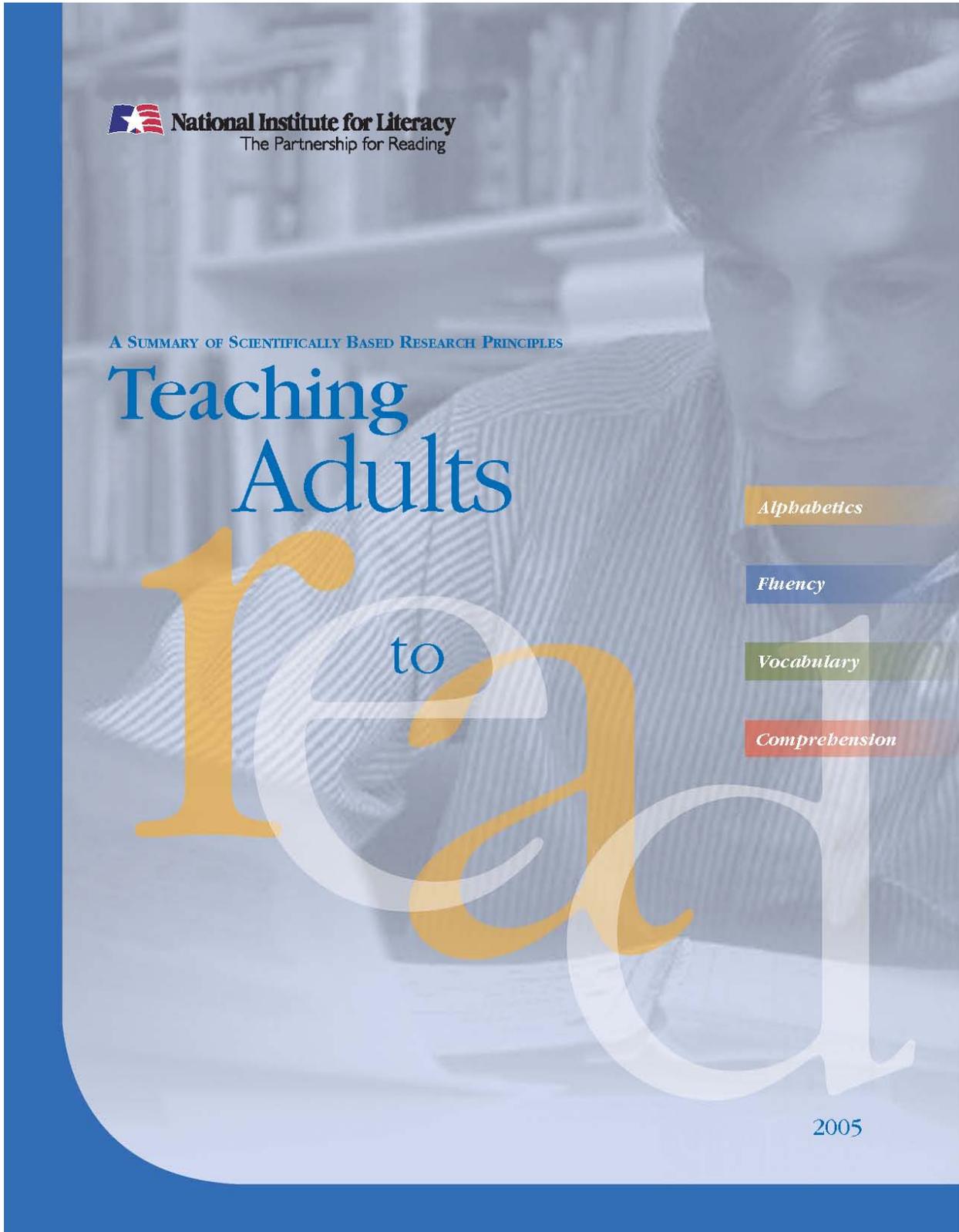
### **SESSION FOUR: MAKING OUR RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE PUBLIC**

Share the results of your research. Discuss the significance of your findings and conclusions and the implications for practice. Seek the feedback and perspectives of others. Draft a research paper, summarizing each stage of the research process. Celebrate your accomplishments in practitioner research as professional development.

#### **CONTINUING THE RESEARCH AT HOME**

Complete the initial draft of your research paper. Seek the feedback and perspectives of others. Edit and revise your report as necessary.







A SUMMARY OF SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

# Teaching Adults

read  
to

*Authors*

Mary E. Curtis and John R. Kruidenier

This publication was produced under National Institute for Literacy Contract No. ED-03-CO-0026 with Kruidenier Education Consulting. It was designed and edited under Contract No. ED-00CO-0093 with RMC Research Corporation. June Crawford of the National Institute for Literacy served as the contract office's representative. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policies of the National Institute for Literacy. No official endorsement by the National Institute for Literacy of any product, commodity, entity, or enterprise in this publication is intended or should be inferred.

***The National Institute for Literacy***

Sandra Baxter, Director  
Lynn Reddy, Deputy Director

***The Partnership for Reading***, a project administered by the National Institute for Literacy, is a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to make scientifically based reading research available to educators, parents, policy makers, and others with an interest in helping all people learn to read well.

***The National Institute for Literacy***, a federal organization, supports the development of high quality state, regional, and national literacy services so that all Americans can develop the skills they need to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

The Partnership for Reading acknowledges the editorial and design support of C. Ralph Adler, Diane Draper, Elizabeth Goldman, Lisa Noonis, and Robert Kozman of RMC Research Corporation.

2005

# Contents

Introduction .....	1
Alphabets .....	4
Fluency .....	6
Vocabulary .....	7
Reading Comprehension .....	9
Putting It All Together .....	11
Bibliography .....	13

This Partnership for Reading publication describes strategies proven to work by the most rigorous scientific research available on the teaching of reading. The research that confirmed the effectiveness of these strategies used systematic, empirical methods drawn from observation or experiment; involved rigorous data analyses to test its hypotheses and justify its conclusions; produced valid data across multiple evaluators and observations; and was accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts. The application of these research-based strategies will increase the likelihood of success in reading instruction. Adherence to scientifically based research in this publication was ensured by a review process that included representatives of each Partnership for Reading organization and external expert reviewers. For detailed information on this review process, contact the Partnership for Reading at the National Institute for Literacy, 1775 I Street NW, Suite 730, Washington, DC 20006.

---

For additional copies of this booklet, download PDF or HTML versions at [www.nifl.gov/partnershipfor-reading](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipfor-reading). To order print copies, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland 20794-1398. Call 1-800-228-8813 or email [edpubs@inet.ed.gov](mailto:edpubs@inet.ed.gov).

# Introduction

Teaching reading is a complex undertaking, especially when the learner is an adult. Unlike children, adult learners cannot spend several hours in a classroom every day. Most adults learning to read find it difficult to attend classes at all; those who enroll in a basic education program can spend, at most, a few hours a week working on their reading.

When adult students arrive in the classroom, they can be at just about any level in their reading development, from beginning readers working on the fundamentals to more advanced readers ready to begin study for a high school level equivalency diploma.

Emotional factors such as motivation, engagement, and fear of failure play a major role in reading success. These feelings can be especially intense for adults, particularly for learners who have spent years struggling with reading and hiding their inability to read from family members, friends, coworkers, and employers.

Given the complexity of the task, what methods should educators use to help adult learners make substantial gains in their reading skills?

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**. This group of adult education and reading experts was established by the National Institute for Literacy and co-sponsored by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Its purpose was to identify research-based principles for adult reading instruction.

We know a lot about how to teach children to read, including children who find it difficult to master reading. The reports of the National Reading Panel (**Teaching Children to Read**) and the National Research Council (**Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children**) describe strategies that work, according to the findings of extensive, high quality, and rigorous research. We know much less about effective strategies for teaching adults to read. The National Reading Panel (NRP), using an exacting screening process, found more than 400 studies to review. By comparison, the Reading Research Working Group found only about 70 studies on adult reading instruction and assessment that met the criteria for quality research. This was true even when the research criteria developed by the NRP were expanded to include more descriptive studies of reading instruction.

# 1

Reading is a complex process where all components may be active at the same time. Instruction, therefore, should address each major aspect of reading. Also, reading develops gradually over time and a reader's mastery of different components may develop at different rates. Assessing each component provides a complete picture of an adult's reading ability. The need to assess and teach all the components has important implications for teachers. These are presented in the final chapter,

**Putting It All Together.**

Another intent of this summary is to encourage teachers to consult reading instruction research. Whenever a research-based reading principle is presented, it is accompanied by a page reference to **Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction**. Teachers interested in specific research studies may find brief descriptions of the research, and citations for complete articles, in that book. Ideas from the K-12 research are accompanied by page references to the National Reading Panel report as well as to **Research-Based Principles**, which states the ideas in the context of adult reading instruction research.

### HOW PAGE REFERENCES ARE USED IN THIS BOOKLET

**Example 1:** "When alphabets is a part of adult beginning reading instruction, increases in reading achievement are found (43)."

The number inside parentheses at the end of this statement refers to a page in **Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction**, and indicates that the statement is based on existing research with adult learners. In this example, information about the research that supports the statement can be found on page 43 of **Research-Based Principles**.

**Example 2:** "For word analysis, effective strategies systematically teach letter-sound correspondences directly and explicitly. They focus on teaching learners how to convert individual graphemes (letters and letter combinations) into phonemes and then blend them together to form a word. Or, they focus on converting larger letter combinations such as common spelling patterns (e.g., ing, able, un) (NRP, 2-92, 2-93; RBP, 51)."

The abbreviations and numbers inside the parentheses at the end of this statement refer to chapter and page references in the National Reading Panel report and to page references in **Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction**, and indicate that the statement is based on findings from research with children and then extended for their implications for teaching reading to adults. In this example, the statement comes from pages 92 and 93 in Chapter Two of the NRP report, and is extended on page 51 of **Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Reading Instruction**.

2

Today, researchers are working diligently to expand the base of scientific research in adult reading instruction. Several promising studies sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institute for Literacy, and the U.S. Department of Education are examining methods specifically for teaching reading to adults. Results from these studies, however, may not be available for several years. If adult educators want to use the best practices that the research has to offer, what can they do as they wait for a critical mass of adult reading research results to accumulate? Where should teachers in community-based programs, community colleges, and family literacy programs turn for suggestions on teaching adults to read when the research has not yet fully addressed the field's important topics?

**The Reading Research Working Group (RRWG) took the following approach to these questions:**

- ▶ It looked at the adult reading instruction research;
- ▶ It identified advice for practice (principles) from the best of this research; and
- ▶ It supplemented these findings with those from the National Reading Panel report.

Supplementary results from the NRP were selected carefully, using criteria that take into account important differences between readers in different age groups. The RRWG called the suggestions for adult reading assess-

ment and instruction **emerging principles** and **trends** because the small number of available research studies made it impossible to derive many truly robust principles. With a few exceptions, the studies used to derive the emerging principles and trends were published in peer-reviewed journals. Of these studies, the greatest weight was given to those that compared adults in different treatment groups. Other more descriptive studies were used as supporting evidence.

This summary presents the results of the Reading Research Working Group's review of adult reading instruction research. Each of the first four sections addresses one essential component of reading instruction: alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The same questions are raised for each:

- ▶ **What is the component?**
- ▶ **Why teach it?**
- ▶ **How do you assess it?**

In addition, for each topic, we briefly describe the implications for teachers. This booklet was not intended to offer extensive examples of how the research can be translated into practice. We encourage readers to consult other resources offered by the Partnership for Reading for examples of scientifically based instructional strategies for adult literacy (visit [www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading)).

## ALPHABETICS

/a//l//f//a//b//e//t//i//k//s/

### *What is alphabetic?*

English is an alphabetic language. The letters in its alphabet represent the sounds of spoken English. The process of using the written letters in an alphabet to represent meaningful spoken words is called alphabetic, and includes both phonemic awareness and word analysis. Phonemic awareness is the knowledge of the basic sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. Word analysis is the knowledge of the connection between written letters or letter combinations and the sounds they represent.

### *Why teach alphabetic?*

Phonemic awareness and word analysis help learners become familiar with how the English writing system works—a crucial step in learning to read. Students with good phonemic awareness know how to manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken English. They know, for example, that the spoken word *cat* is made up of three sounds: /c//a//t/. (Note that letters appearing between slashes should be read as sounds—for example, /b/ is read as the first sound in *bob*—not as *bee*.)

Students with good word analysis know how individual letters and combinations of letters represent the sounds of spoken English. They know, for example, that the string of written letters *c*, *a*, and *t* represent the spoken word *cat*. They know how to blend sounds together to form regularly spelled words and how to recognize irregularly spelled words by sight. As readers advance beyond the very beginning levels, more com-

plex aspects of word analysis, such as the knowledge of word parts (for example, prefixes, suffixes, stems, and compounds) and the use of tools such as the dictionary, may contribute to word reading ability.

Adult non-readers have virtually no awareness of phonemes (39), and adult beginning readers have difficulty manipulating phonemes (39). They also have difficulty applying letter-sound knowledge in order to figure out new or unfamiliar words while reading (40). When adult beginning reading instruction includes alphabetic, increases in reading achievement occur (43).

### *How do you assess alphabetic?*

Phonemic awareness is assessed **orally** through tasks that ask learners to demonstrate their ability to manipulate the sounds in spoken words. The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000, p. 2-10) provides the following summary of these kinds of tasks.

- ▶ **Phoneme isolation:** recognizing individual sounds in words, for example, "Tell me the first sound in *paste*." (/p/)
- ▶ **Phoneme identity:** recognizing the common sound in different words, for example, "Tell me the sound that is the same in *bike*, *boy*, and *bell*." (/b/)
- ▶ **Phoneme categorization:** recognizing the odd sounding word in a sequence of three or four words, for example, "Which word does not belong? *bus*, *bun*, *rug*." (*rug*)

4

► **Phoneme blending:** listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognizable word. For example, "What word is */s/ /k/ /l/ /l/ /r/*" (*school*)

► **Phoneme segmentation:** breaking a word into its sounds by tapping out or counting the sounds, or by pronouncing and positioning a marker for each sound, for example, "How many sounds are there in *ship*?" (three: */sh/ /l/ /p/*)

► **Phoneme deletion:** recognizing what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed, for example, "What is smile without the */s/*?" (*mile*)

Word analysis is assessed through tasks that ask students to demonstrate their ability to say the sounds in *written* words or parts of words. Letters or letter combinations that represent a basic sound, or phoneme, are called *graphemes*. Students can be asked to pronounce single-letter graphemes, two-letter graphemes or digraphs, or larger word parts such as blends. Sample tasks would be:

- "What sounds do these letters make: *b, d, f*?"
- "What is the short vowel sound made by these letters: *a, e, i*?"
- "What sounds do these letters make: *ch, ck, oa, ee*?"
- "What sounds do these letters make: *br, st, str, at, am*?"

The ability to pronounce word parts can also be assessed with whole word tasks. To find out if someone can decode the short *a* vowel sound, for example, we might ask him or her to read the word *can*. Any

response with a short *a* sound in the middle position would be correct (*can, cat, or ban*) because it contains the short *a* target phoneme.

### *Alphabetics: implications for teachers*

Alphabetics can be improved by participation in adult education (42, 43), and explicit instruction may be the best way to accomplish this (45). Explicit instruction consists of direct teaching of letter-sound relationships in a clearly defined sequence.

The NRP's review of K-12 alphabetics instruction suggests that phonemic awareness and word analysis should be taught together. Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when letters, not just sounds, are used for instruction. Research at the K-12 level also suggests that the most effective strategies for teaching phonemic awareness focus on a few specific skills, especially blending (putting individual phonemes or sounds together to form words) and segmenting (breaking a word into its individual phonemes) (NRP, 2-4, 2-5; RBP, 50).

Effective word analysis strategies systematically teach letter-sound correspondences directly and explicitly. They focus on teaching learners how to convert individual graphemes (letters and letter combinations) into phonemes (sounds) and then blend them together to form a word. Or, they focus on converting larger letter combinations such as common spelling patterns into sounds (e.g., *ing, able, un*) (NRP, 2-92, 2-93; RBP, 51).

## FLUENCY

### *What is fluency?*

Fluency is the ability to read with efficiency and ease. Fluent readers can read quickly and accurately and with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Individuals who are learning to read often are not fluent. Their reading is choppy and filled with hesitations. They make false starts and mistakes in pronunciation. But even mature readers may read less fluently if they try to read texts that contain many unfamiliar words. Their reading may slow down and be characterized by more hesitations and mispronunciations than usual.

### *Why teach fluency?*

Without fluency, readers attend more to decoding than to understanding the meaning of what they are reading. Fluency promotes comprehension by freeing cognitive resources for interpretation. Fluent reading also signals that readers are pausing at appropriate points to make sense of the text. When a reader can reproduce the rhythm intended by the author, he or she can grasp the meaning more easily.

Fluency is an issue for adult beginning readers, intermediate readers, and for some who read at more advanced Adult Basic Education levels. In a large-scale assessment of over one thousand young adults, those with poor fluency had a silent reading rate of about 145 or fewer words per minute—almost 100 words per minute slower than the fluent readers (57). The oral reading rate and accuracy of adult beginning readers closely resembles those of children who are beginning to read (57).

6

### *How do you assess fluency?*

Reading fluency can be measured formally with standardized tests, or informally with reading inventories, miscue analyses, pausing indices, or measures of rate. Typically, a student reads aloud while the teacher observes and records reading accuracy and reading rate. Reading accuracy is the number or percentage of words read correctly in a text. Reading rate or speed is the number of words read in a given amount of time, such as the number of words read in a minute, or the average number of words read per minute.

Sometimes measures of oral reading accuracy and rate are combined, as in determining the average number of words read correctly in a minute. Fluency can also be estimated by timing how long it takes to read a passage of text silently.

Another way to assess fluency is by the rhythm a reader has while reading. As part of a study conducted by The National Assessment of Educational Progress, researchers developed a four-point fluency scale based on pauses. Level one on the scale represents readers who read word by word, while level four represents those who pause only at the boundaries of meaningful phrases and clauses.

### *Fluency: implications for teachers*

Repeated reading is the most effective instructional technique for increasing reading fluency in adults (58-61). In repeated reading, a student reads a passage many times while a teacher provides feedback about rate and accuracy levels, helps with difficult words, and models fluent reading.

## FLUENCY

*fluency*

### *What is fluency?*

Fluency is the ability to read with efficiency and ease. Fluent readers can read quickly and accurately and with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Individuals who are learning to read often are not fluent. Their reading is choppy and filled with hesitations. They make false starts and mistakes in pronunciation. But even mature readers may read less fluently if they try to read texts that contain many unfamiliar words. Their reading may slow down and be characterized by more hesitations and mispronunciations than usual.

### *Why teach fluency?*

Without fluency, readers attend more to decoding than to understanding the meaning of what they are reading. Fluency promotes comprehension by freeing cognitive resources for interpretation. Fluent reading also signals that readers are pausing at appropriate points to make sense of the text. When a reader can reproduce the rhythm intended by the author, he or she can grasp the meaning more easily.

Fluency is an issue for adult beginning readers, intermediate readers, and for some who read at more advanced Adult Basic Education levels. In a large-scale assessment of over one thousand young adults, those with poor fluency had a silent reading rate of about 145 or fewer words per minute—almost 100 words per minute slower than the fluent readers (57). The oral reading rate and accuracy of adult beginning readers closely resembles those of children who are beginning to read (57).

### *How do you assess fluency?*

Reading fluency can be measured formally with standardized tests, or informally with reading inventories, miscue analyses, pausing indices, or measures of rate. Typically, a student reads aloud while the teacher observes and records reading accuracy and reading rate. Reading accuracy is the number or percentage of words read correctly in a text. Reading rate or speed is the number of words read in a given amount of time, such as the number of words read in a minute, or the average number of words read per minute.

Sometimes measures of oral reading accuracy and rate are combined, as in determining the average number of words read correctly in a minute. Fluency can also be estimated by timing how long it takes to read a passage of text silently.

Another way to assess fluency is by the rhythm a reader has while reading. As part of a study conducted by The National Assessment of Educational Progress, researchers developed a four-point fluency scale based on pauses. Level one on the scale represents readers who read word by word, while level four represents those who pause only at the boundaries of meaningful phrases and clauses.

### *Fluency: implications for teachers*

Repeated reading is the most effective instructional technique for increasing reading fluency in adults (58-61). In repeated reading, a student reads a passage many times while a teacher provides feedback about rate and accuracy levels, helps with difficult words, and models fluent reading.

6

## VOCABULARY

# vo·cab·u·lar·y

Vocabulary: noun

1. All the words of a language. 2. The sum of words used by, understood by, or at the command of a particular person or group. 3. A list of words and often phrases, usually arranged alphabetically and defined or translated; a lexicon or glossary.

Adapted and reproduced by permission from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

### *What is vocabulary?*

A person's vocabulary consists of the individual words whose meanings he or she knows and understands. Reading vocabulary comprises those words that we know and understand as we read. Because reading involves decoding, we can know the meaning of a word when we hear it spoken but still not be able to read it in print. This is common for beginning readers, whose oral vocabulary—that is, their speaking and listening vocabulary—is often larger than their reading vocabulary.

The depth of a person's knowledge of individual words can also vary. We may have a deep understanding for words we use frequently, knowing many or even all of their dictionary definitions, for example. Or our knowledge may be shallow, as it is when we know only one of several meanings for a word, or when we have heard a word only a few times but have never used it ourselves or checked on its definition.

### *Why teach vocabulary?*

As one of several components of reading vocabulary instruction may be best viewed as necessary, but not sufficient. Teaching the meanings of individual words will not ensure that learners can decode fluently or read passages of text with understanding. But vocabulary knowledge and skills are crucial for getting meaning from text. Without knowledge of the meanings of the key concepts in a text, a reader will struggle to understand the writer's intended message.

### *How do you assess vocabulary?*

Vocabulary knowledge can be assessed in many ways, each of which may influence an instructor's view of a student's vocabulary ability. The structure of a test determines the type of vocabulary knowledge being measured, such as receptive vocabulary (listening and reading) or expressive vocabulary (speaking and writing). The nature of the test also determines how much knowledge a reader needs about an individual word (vocabulary depth) to respond correctly to assessment tasks.

For example, some tasks ask the learner to respond with oral answers: "Tell me what the word **travel** means." Responses scored as correct could require very little knowledge (**to go on vacation**) or more depth of knowledge (**to move from one place to another**). Another more common task is the written, multiple-choice question. Multiple-choice items can also be structured to require more, or less, depth of knowledge.

A written multiple-choice question—like other tasks that require students to read a test item—can measure abilities other than a learner's vocabulary knowledge, such as alphabets or fluency. For instance, if a learner cannot decode the words in a vocabulary test item, he may not be able to respond correctly even if he knows the word when hearing it. For this reason, oral vocabulary tests may be more accurate measures of learners' general knowledge of word meanings because they do not require decoding.

# 7

Very little research exists on the assessment of adult basic education (ABE) students' vocabulary knowledge. One study does suggest that teachers should give special attention to ABE learners' vocabulary assessment. This research compared the oral vocabulary knowledge of children and adults who had word recognition scores between grade equivalents 3 to 5. The adults' vocabulary knowledge appeared to be no better on average than children's by the time both were able to read (decode) text written at about the fifth grade level (68). In other words, we should not assume that ABE students will have well-developed vocabularies just because they are older and more experienced. After a certain point, vocabulary growth seems to depend on reading ability.

### *Vocabulary: implications for teachers*

Does participation in ABE increase students' vocabulary achievement? Overall, results from the research are inconclusive: several studies found that participating students' vocabulary knowledge improved, but others found no improvement (69-72).

Initial research suggests that the longer ABE students remain in effective programs, the more their vocabularies will improve (70, 73). But more research is needed to identify teaching practices that are related to factors such as learner characteristics, specific instructional methods or materials, or the effects of teacher training. Two of these topics, learner characteristics and instructional materials, have been addressed by vocabulary instruction research with children. The NRP review of K-12 vocabulary instruction identified five methods (NRP, 4-3):

**Explicit instruction:** students are given definitions or

other attributes of words to be learned. An example would be teaching students about the meanings of common roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

**Implicit instruction:** students are exposed to words or given opportunities to do a great deal of reading. As experiences with words increase, so do opportunities to learn new word meanings.

**Multimedia methods:** students learn vocabulary by going beyond text to experience other media such as graphic representations, hypertext, or American Sign Language that uses a haptic (contact) medium. Semantic mapping, where visual representations are used to illustrate the relationships among new and known word meanings, is an example.

**Capacity methods:** students practice extensively to increase their vocabulary capacity through making reading automatic. For instance, increasing a reader's fluency enables him or her to make better use of the clues in a text that help in learning new word meanings.

**Association methods:** students learn to draw connections between what they do know and words they encounter that they do not know. Pairing a new word with a known synonym is an example.

In addition, the NRP identified some trends that may assist adult educators:

- ▶ Repetition and the use of multiple contexts are important in vocabulary instruction (NRP, 4-4; RBP, 75-76);
- ▶ Active engagement is important in vocabulary instruction (NRP, 4-4); and
- ▶ Clarifying or restructuring vocabulary learning tasks may be especially useful for at-risk learners (NRP, 4-4, 4-21).

# 8

## READING COMPREHENSION

# reading comprehension

### *What is comprehension?*

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from what is read. To comprehend, a reader must decode words and associate them with their meanings. Phrases and sentences must be dealt with fluently enough so that their meanings are not lost before the next ones are processed. Since understanding the message must occur without face-to-face contact with the writer, comprehension relies on what a reader can derive from the text, based on prior knowledge and past experience. Finally, readers must continuously monitor their construction of meaning to identify problems in understanding as they arise and make repairs as needed.

### *Why teach comprehension?*

Whether one reads for work or for pleasure, comprehension is the goal. Comprehension is an active process; readers must interact and be engaged with a text. To accomplish this, proficient readers use strategies or conscious plans of action. Less proficient readers often lack awareness of comprehension strategies, however, and cannot develop them on their own. For adult literacy learners in particular, integrating and synthesizing information from any but the simplest texts can pose difficulties (78). Consequently, most ABE students will benefit from direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies as well as time spent

practicing and discussing strategies for comprehending (80, 86-88).

### *How do you assess comprehension?*

To prepare for instruction and to measure progress, ABE instructors should assess learners' ability to acquire and use information from text. Typically this can be done by asking students to read and answer questions about what they have read. Formats include multiple-choice, short answer, and cloze or fill-in-the-blank questions. Teachers can assess learners' knowledge of comprehension strategies, such as asking questions while reading, writing summaries, or creating outlines, by observing students while they read or by asking them about the strategies they use.

Because results from comprehension assessments may vary widely (depending on the test used and when it is administered), ABE instructors should choose comprehension tests carefully (79). They should also decide whether any secondary issues related to reading comprehension difficulties need to be addressed. For example, adults whose first language is not English or adults with a learning disability are more likely to have reading comprehension deficits (80). For adults in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs, knowledge of the English language will be an issue. For adults with a reading disability, problems with enabling skills such as alphabets or fluency can be the source of the difficulty.



### *Comprehension: implications for teachers*

Research indicates that participation in adult basic education can improve comprehension (81), and points to some very general approaches that may be effective.

Direct instruction in the use of comprehension strategies is one approach that may be effective (86). As summarized by the NRP, direct instruction includes:

- ▶ Helping learners to develop an awareness and understanding of their own cognitive processes;
- ▶ Guiding learners and modeling the actions that readers can take to enhance comprehension; and
- ▶ Providing learners with opportunities to practice strategies with the teacher's assistance until a gradual internalization and independent mastery occurs.

At the K-12 level, several effective strategies have been found: answering questions, asking questions, writing summaries, monitoring comprehension, using graphic and semantic organizers, using story structure, and learning cooperatively (where students work together while learning strategies). Teaching students to use more than one of these strategies, and when to use them, is especially effective (NRP, 4-6, 4-40; RBP, 97).

ABE research also suggests teaching comprehension in tandem with instruction in other reading components (88), an approach supported by very strong evidence

from research at the K-12 level (NRP 2-4, 2-5, 2-20, 2-116, 3-3, 4-4; RBP, 96).

In some ABE instructional settings, student comprehension has been improved by manipulating the classroom environment. Some enabling factors in the classroom environment include: emphasizing learner-centered activities (89); providing assistance to teachers in the classroom with volunteers or paid assistants (90); and dealing explicitly with adults' motivation and how they feel about their reading (95).

#### **Other suggestions supported by research include:**

- ▶ Use adult-oriented material, which can be motivating and necessary for decoding instruction (which, in turn, enables comprehension) (91).
- ▶ Devote sufficient classroom time to reading and writing instruction; one study suggests spending at least 70% of classroom time on reading and writing instruction (92).
- ▶ Encourage students to spend more time in ABE programs, which is associated with greater gains in reading comprehension achievement (92).
- ▶ Employ certified or experienced teachers for ABE instruction (93).

# Putting *It All* Together

The ultimate goal in reading is comprehension: people read to learn and understand. Readers must interact with a text for comprehension to occur, combining its ideas and information with what they already know. They understand more when they are familiar with the basic vocabulary or concepts presented, or when they can develop their understanding of new words as they read. When a reader does not have adequate prior knowledge and cannot figure out key concepts, comprehension suffers.

Comprehension may also suffer when readers cannot recognize individual words in a text. A reader may be conceptually ready to understand a text, for example, but will be unable to do so if he or she cannot read the individual words. Alphabetic instruction gives readers the tools they need to decode individual words. To read individual words, the reader must know how the letters in our alphabet represent spoken words (alphabetic). This includes knowing how words are made up of smaller sounds (phonemic awareness), and how letters and combinations of letters represent these sounds (phonics and word analysis).

The ability to decode individual words, however, is not sufficient. Readers must also be able to recognize strings of words rapidly as they read sentences and longer texts. Fluent reading is crucial to adequate comprehension.

As the previous sections have indicated, each major component of reading (alphabetic, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) develops through specific practices. But just as all the components must function together for reading to be effective, they must be taught together to maximize instructional effectiveness.

One way that teachers can better prepare to address all of the components together in instruction is by creating reading profiles. A reading profile combines information from tests in several components to create a picture of a reader's strengths and needs for instructional purposes (Chall, 1994; Chall & Curtis, 1990; Roswell & Chall, 1994; Strucker, 1997). It involves assessing a student in each major component of reading and using a common measure, such as grade equivalents, to create an outline of strengths and needs.

Because reading profiles present a comprehensive view of learner strengths and needs across many aspects of the reading process (and for all kinds of readers, including those with reading disabilities and English language learners), teachers can use them to design a program of instruction that addresses all aspects of the reading process. Assessing only one reading component may not be sufficient to identify strengths and needs for instruction (32). Students with different profiles may need different mixes of

# 11

instructional approaches. Developing specific approaches to instruction for different reading profiles may lead to more efficient instruction. This ensures a balanced approach in which no one aspect of the reading process is over- or under-emphasized (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Snow and Strucker, 2000).

We conclude our summary of the results from the Reading Research Working Group review of adult reading instruction research by acknowledging an area that has received very little attention: motivation, or the need and desire to learn to read. Most educators maintain that effective reading and reading instruction cannot occur without sufficient motivation on the part of the learner. Motivation would seem to be especially important in adult literacy because—in addition to an initial desire to learn to read—adults must address many barriers to participation, set aside the time necessary to receive effective instruction, and overcome any embarrassment resulting from the stigma associated with seeking help for poor reading skills. When researchers have looked at motivation, results suggest that dealing with adults' literacy beliefs and goals for learning may increase their reading comprehension achievement (95).

Use of research-based principles will assist the adult educator in selecting teaching and learning experiences that will provide the greatest opportunities for success. The Adult Literacy Research Working Group continues to examine research and materials that will assist the adult educator in teaching reading so that adult learners can achieve their goals in the workplace, family, and community.

### *The classroom connection*

This booklet is designed to summarize key findings from scientific research about teaching adults to read. For more information on how these research findings relate to instructional strategies, visit the Partnership for Reading website at [www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading) and click on the link for adult literacy.

# Bibliography

Chall, J. S. (1994). Patterns of adult reading. *Learning Disabilities*, 5(1), 29-33.

Chall, J. S., & Curtis, M. E. (1990). Diagnostic achievement testing in reading. In C. Reynolds & R. Kamphaus (Eds.), *Handbook of psychological and educational assessment of children* (pp. 349-355). New York: Guilford.

Kruidenier, J. R. (2002). *Research-based principles for Adult Basic Education reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

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

Roswell, F. G., & Chall, J. S. (1994). *Creating successful readers: A practical guide to testing and teaching at all age levels*. Chicago: Riverside.

Strucker, J. (1997). What silent reading tests alone can't tell you: Two case studies in adult reading differences. *Focus on Basics*, 1(B), 13-16.

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

Snow, C. E. & Strucker, J. (2000). Lessons from *Preventing reading difficulties in young children* for adult learning and literacy. In J. Comings & B. Garner (Eds.), *Annual review of adult learning and literacy: A project of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy* (Vol. 1, pp. 25-73). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.





## Jigsaw Activity: Alphabetics

In your “teaching group,” you will be with other colleagues who each know about a different component of reading. You are the only person who knows about alphabetics. You will have 15 minutes to teach them what you have learned, using the following steps:

1. First, take five minutes to give your colleagues an overview of alphabetics, using the information in *Teaching Adults to Read*. Tell (rather than read from the book) them briefly what alphabetics is, why it should be taught, and what some examples of evidence-based instructional practices are.
2. Next, take five minutes and teach the activity below, as if your colleagues are students in your class.
3. If there is time left in your 15 minutes after you have taught the activity, ask the participants to comment on the activity, ask questions about alphabetics, and/or discuss other strategies for teaching alphabetics.

### WORD FAMILY APPROACH TO DECODING UNFAMILIAR WORDS

Explain: “A strategy we can use to read words we don’t recognize by sight is the “word family” strategy. “Word families” are groups of letters that often go together in words. *Ing*, for example, is a word family because many words have *ing* in them (*sing, ring, wing, thing*).”

As you give this example, write these words on a sheet of paper in letters large enough for the “learners” to see them, underlining the *ing* in each word. Then encourage the “learners” to add to the list other words they know that include *ing*, writing these words as they say them.

Next, write the following words on a sheet of paper and ask “learners” to decode them by identifying and reading the “word family” first (*ank*).

sank tank prank

Write the next sets of words, three at a time, and ask learners to decode them by reading the “word family” first.

flick kick brick

bunk lunk trunk

fish Trish wish



## Jigsaw Activity: Fluency

In your “teaching group,” you will be with other colleagues who each know about a different component of reading. You are the only person who knows about fluency. You will have 15 minutes to teach them what you have learned, using the following steps:

1. First, take five minutes to give your colleagues an overview of fluency, using the information in *Teaching Adults to Read*. Tell (rather than read from the book) them briefly what fluency is, why it should be taught, and what some examples of evidence-based instructional practices are.
2. Next, take five minutes and teach the activity below, as if your colleagues are students in your class.
3. If there is time left in your 15 minutes after you have taught the activity, ask the participants to comment on the activity, ask questions about fluency, and/or discuss other strategies for teaching fluency.

### GUIDED REPEATED READING FOR IMPROVING FLUENCY

Have students apply the concept of fluency to their own reading:

- Ask students to find a partner.
- Give each pair a short selection of text. (see below)
- Ask students to take turns reading aloud to each other.
- Ask students to read the same selection twice, noting how much more fluent they read the second time around.

My child often asks me, “Mom, what is your best time of the year?” It is hard to choose. I like spring, summer, and fall the best. I love spring when the flowers begin to grow. I like the warm days of summer when I can go to the sea. I also love fall, when the days are cool.

## Reading Selection

My child often asks me, “Mom, what is your best time of the year?” It is hard to choose. I like spring, summer, and fall the best. I love spring when the flowers begin to grow. I like the warm days of summer when I can go to the sea. I also love fall, when the days are cool.

## Jigsaw Activity: Vocabulary

In your “teaching” group, you will be with other colleagues who each know about a different component of reading. You are the only person who knows about vocabulary. You will have 15 minutes to “teach” them what you have learned, using the following steps:

1. First, take five minutes to give your colleagues an overview of vocabulary, using the information in *Teaching Adults to Read*. Tell (rather than read from the book) them briefly what vocabulary is, why it should be taught, and what some examples of evidence-based instructional practices are.
2. Next, take five minutes and teach the activity below, as if your colleagues are students in your class.
3. If there is time left in your 15 minutes after you have taught the activity, ask the participants to comment on the activity, ask questions about vocabulary, and/or discuss other strategies for teaching vocabulary.

**IDENTIFY STRATEGIES FOR FIGURING OUT THE MEANINGS OF UNFAMILIAR WORDS**

Ask: "If you read a word and you don't know what it means, how can you figure out what the word means?" Students will probably mention using the dictionary and/or asking someone. Write these responses on the board and ask: "What if we do not have a dictionary and no one is around to ask? Let's explore that."

Write the following sentences on a sheet of paper in large letters and read them aloud.

It was hot and sticky. I was hungry and tired. I felt smucky.

Ask: "What do you think the word "smucky" means? What can help you to figure out the meaning of this word that you have never seen before?"

Use the following guided questioning to help students discover the value of using context clues and thinking about words they already know as strategies for understanding new words.

- Ask: "What words in the sentence provide clues to the meaning of the word *smucky*? Are *hot*, *sticky*, *tired*, and *hungry* used to describe positive or negative feelings?"
- Ask: "What word do you know that sounds like *smucky*? (Possible answers are *yucky* and *mucky*) Are these words used to describe positive or negative feelings?"

Explain: "So, even though you don't exactly know what *smucky* means, you can make a guess by looking at the other words in the sentence and by seeing how the new word is used. When we take an educated guess about what a new word means because of how it is used in the sentence, we call this strategy 'using context clues'."

## Jigsaw Activity: Comprehension

In your “teaching group,” you will be with other colleagues who each know about a different component of reading. You are the only person who knows about comprehension. You will have 15 minutes to “teach” them what you have learned, using the following steps:

1. First, take five minutes to give your colleagues an overview of comprehension, using the information in *Teaching Adults to Read*. Tell (rather than read from the sheet) them briefly what comprehension is, why it should be taught, and what some examples of evidence-based instructional practices are.
2. Next, take five minutes and teach the activity below, as if your colleagues are students in your class.
3. If there is time left in your 15 minutes after you have taught the activity, ask the participants to comment on the activity, ask questions about comprehension, and/or discuss other strategies for teaching comprehension.

### QUESTION GENERATING FOR IMPROVING COMPREHENSION

Write the following words on a sheet of paper in letters large enough for your colleagues to see:

- What
- Why
- Who

Now, write the title “The Egyptian Tomb” on the sheet of paper. Ask “learners” to *turn the title into questions*, using the “signal words” that are written on the board. Write the questions they generate on the sheet of paper as they say them. Some examples, in case they have a hard time getting started, include:

- Why was the Egyptian tomb important?
- Who was buried in the Egyptian tomb?
- Who discovered the Egyptian tomb?
- What did they find in the Egyptian tomb?
- What did they learn when they found the Egyptian tomb?







## Critical Friends<sup>5</sup>

### DEVELOPING YOUR QUESTION: INSTRUCTIONS FOR CRITICAL FRIENDS

We will be using the “Critical Friends” activity throughout our practitioner research training. Basically, in pairs or small groups, it will be an opportunity to share your ideas and data and to explore the various factors that contribute to the issues, or problems, that interest you. This is an opportunity for you to view issues from a variety of perspectives. This activity encourages everyone to question assumptions and generate new ideas or alternative ways of thinking about problems and issues.

Remember: Critical friends should not offer advice or suggest possible solutions at any time during the discussion.

Directions:

1. Take five minutes to read each of the writings of your fellow participants prepared for this activity. As you read, underline words or phrases that stand out for some reason. These may be powerful words or phrases about which you want to hear more. They may be words that represent vague or ambiguous ideas that leave you feeling a bit unclear. Or, they may be words or phrases that seem to capture what matters most to your colleague.
2. In the margins pose "I wonder..." questions in relation to the ideas your colleague has written about. Curiosity questions are broad, open-ended, and thought provoking. These should help your partners generate more vivid descriptions or deeper levels of thinking about their questions.
3. After you've completed reading and made notes, discuss each person's question and problem in detail. Take about 10 minutes for each person's issue. Some questions that might be helpful include:

---

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Understanding the Issues: Adapted by Cassie Drennon (1998) Practitioner Inquiry for Staff Development and Program Improvement: A Facilitation Guide for Local Adult Literacy Programs, Department of Adult Education, The University of Georgia. Further credit goes to Brookfield, (1995) Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher and Mezirow, J. (1990) Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood. Copyright © 2002 The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center

- If the underlying issue is made clear, what might be alternative ways to describe it?
  - Could the issue actually be something else? If so, what?
  - What do you think are all the possible causes?
  - What difference would it make for you, your learners, and your program, if you understood this problem better, or solved it?
4. End the discussions with the opportunity for the writers to comment on how they might re-frame their research questions, and what they have learned from their comments.
  5. On a sheet of newsprint, write your research questions using the posted format.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Research

We need different types of research to understand reading. For example, to better understand the effects of teaching particular skills, we need research that is large scale and measures reading outcomes produced when a particular skill is taught. This type of research is typically **quantitative**, where researchers count “things” (such as test scores) to understand what works on a broad scale.

However, to understand better what people do with reading in their daily lives, the different contexts in which they read, and their motivations to read, we need research on a much smaller scale, where people are interviewed and observed over longer periods of time. This type of research is typically **qualitative**, where researchers collect stories and life experiences to get an in-depth understanding of what works with specific individuals and communities.

**QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH** attempts to:

- explain reality with facts
- show cause and effect
- predict what will happen under certain circumstances

Examples of quantitative methods are experiments, double-blind studies, and surveys with a pre-determined set of questions. Quantitative research often uses statistical methods to draw conclusions about a large population from a smaller sample.

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH** attempts to:

- understand reality from the point of view of the participants in the study
- understand the complexity of a situation
- develop theories about a problem
- explain why a particular method works or doesn't work

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



## The Language of Research<sup>6</sup>

**CONTEXT:** The particular circumstances, setting, and conditions related to your data.

**SUBJECTIVITY:** A particular slant you bring to the research based on your values, aspirations, prior experiences, beliefs, personal motivations, etc. These all affect how you make sense of the data.

**ANNOTATE:** To read and remark on your data. In the margins of your transcripts and field notes, you record insights, emerging theories, and passing thoughts; summarize ideas; and ask questions.

**CATEGORIZE:** To organize your data according to broad themes and subtopics. It is a way of ordering what you have collected, in an early stage of analysis. Categories can be derived deductively or inductively.

**CODE:** An abbreviation you attach to the various categories you have derived from the data. They can be numbers or letters. It is a kind of shorthand so you can quickly know what the data are about. The process of coding involves labeling individual “bits” of data according to what they are about—according to your categories.

**SORT:** To physically organize all the bits of data according to the codes you have assigned.

**ANALYZE:** To think deeply, rigorously, and systematically about the coded and sorted data. It is the mental process of determining what you believe it all means and what really matters for answering your question.

**CRITICALLY ANALYZE:** To look systematically for evidence that counters your analysis. This is to look for complex patterns, deep structures, and inter-relationships among the data. Critical analysis involves trying to understand your data within a larger social, political, or cultural context.

**FINDINGS:** Broad statements summarizing the various conclusions taught to you by your data. It is really a misnomer: “findings” are not found; rather, they are our creation.

**INTERPRETATION:** A particular story you can tell through the data.

---

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from the Georgia Adult Literacy Staff Development Practitioner Inquiry Project, 1997–1998.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Statements about what the findings mean for practice, for policy, or for further research—answering the question “so...?” after answering your research question.

## Ways To Collect Data<sup>7</sup>

The key to good data collection is being systematic. The process can be complex and extended over a long period of time, or it can be fairly simple and quickly collected.

METHODS	TYPE	OF WHAT OR WHOM?
Interviews	One-to-one Group Structured Semi-structured Open-ended Teacher-conducted Learners-conducted Tape-recorded Recorded by note-taking	Current learners Former learners Non-participants Other staff Community members Practitioners in other programs
Observations	Teacher as observer (while actually teaching) Other people as observers (i.e., a colleague) Keeping a written log, notes, or journal (during or after the event) Checklist Tape recording Video recording	Learners in your classroom Learner or learner/ staff interactions Yourself teaching as usual Colleagues teaching in their classrooms Colleagues teaching your class Staff meetings Community meetings

---

<sup>7</sup> NCSALL Practitioner Research Group on Learner Motivation, Retention, and Persistence (1998). Boston, MA: NCSALL

METHODS	TYPE	OF WHAT OR WHOM?
Survey	Questions followed by a checklist Multiple choice questions Short response to open-ended questions Fill-in the blanks Inventory (i.e., statements followed by strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, strongly disagree) In-person By mail Over the telephone	(Same as interviews but can be done with larger groups)
Collect Existing Data or Documents	Learners' writing and other work Teachers' writing Unwritten evidence (i.e., appearance of a classroom, photographs) Learner intake forms Test scores Attendance data Newspaper articles Flyers and announcements Curriculum materials Bulletin boards	Current learners Former learners Existing program staff Former program staff Members of the community Events in the community