NCSALL Seminar Guide:

Reading Profiles

September 2005

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Reading Profiles

This seminar guide was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) to introduce adult education practitioners to the reading profiles from the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS). Programs or professional developers may want to use this seminar in place of a regularly scheduled meeting, such as a statewide training or a local program staff meeting.

Objectives:

By the end of the seminar, participants will be able to:

- Explain why developing reading profiles for students will help them, as teachers, to plan better, more focused reading instruction
- Prepare instructional plans for students using the tools and reading profiles on the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web site

Participants: 8 to 12 practitioners who work in adult education—teachers and tutors

Time: 3 hours

Agenda:

- 20 minutes 1. Welcome and Introductions
- 5 minutes 2. Objectives and Agenda
- 40 minutes 3. Discussion of Reading Assessment
- 15 minutes Break
- 75 minutes 4. ARCS Profiles
- 20 minutes 5. Planning Next Steps for the Group
- 5 minutes 6. Evaluation of the Seminar
Session Preparation:

This guide includes the information and materials needed to conduct the seminar—step-by-step instructions for the activities, approximate time for each activity, and notes and other ideas for conducting the activities. The handouts and reading, ready for photocopying, are at the end of the guide.

A computer lab with Internet connections is needed at the location for this seminar. Each participant works with the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web site (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/) in the fourth step.

[Note: If a computer lab is not available for the seminar, use the handout Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles or accompanying Power Point as alternatives for demonstrating the content of the Web site.]

Participants should receive the following reading at least 10 days before the seminar. Ask participants to read this article before the seminar.

- What Silent Reading Tests Alone Can’t Tell You: Two Case Studies in Adult Reading Differences by John Strucker (Focus on Basics, Volume 1, Issue B, May 1997)

Also ask participants to bring assessment data for one student with whom they are currently working to the seminar. They must have five scores for a student in order to make a match for a reading profile:

- Word Recognition—as a Grade Equivalent (GE)
- Spelling—as a GE
- Word Meaning—as a GE
- Silent Reading Comprehension—as a GE
- Oral Reading Rate—as Words per Minute (WPM)

[Note: If participants don’t have assessment data, sample data is supplied for them on a handout.]

The facilitator should read the article and preview the Web site, in addition to studying the seminar steps and preparing the materials on the following list.
☐ **Newsprints** (Prepare ahead of time.)
   ___ Objectives and Agenda (p. 6)
   ___ Discussion Questions (p. 7)
   ___ Next Steps (p. 8)
   ___ Useful/How to Improve (p. 9)

☐ **Handouts** (Make copies for each participant.)
   ___ Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles
   ___ Student Assessment Data
   ___ Sample Instructional Plan

📖 **Reading** (Have two or three extra copies available for participants who forget to bring theirs.)
   ___ What Silent Reading Tests Alone Can’t Tell You: Two Case Studies in Adult Reading Differences

**Materials**
   ___ Newsprint easel
   ___ Markers, pens, tape
   ___ Sticky dots

**Computer Lab**
   ___ Computers with Internet access for each participant**

**If the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web site is not accessible during the seminar, use the Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles handout as an alternative method for demonstrating the content. Make transparencies from the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, or ask participants to review the handout pages together.
Steps:

1. Welcome and Introductions (20 minutes)

- **Welcome participants** to the seminar. **Introduce yourself** and state your role as facilitator. Explain how you came to facilitate this seminar and who is sponsoring it.

- **Ask participants to introduce themselves** (name, program, and role) and briefly describe one tool that they use for reading assessment with their students.

- **Make sure that participants know** where bathrooms are located, when the session will end, when the break will be, and any other housekeeping information.

2. Objectives and Agenda (5 minutes)

- **Post the newsprint Objectives and Agenda** and review the objectives and steps with the participants.

<table>
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<th>Objectives</th>
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<td>By the end of the seminar, you will be able to:</td>
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<th>Agenda</th>
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<td>1. Welcome and Introductions (Done!)</td>
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<td>2. Objectives and Agenda (Doing)</td>
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<td>3. Discussion of Reading Assessment</td>
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<td>4. ARCS Profiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Planning Next Steps for the Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Evaluation of the Seminar</td>
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3. Discussion of Reading Assessment (40 minutes)

- **Explain that in this next activity participants will reflect on the reading for today’s meeting.**

  [Note to facilitator: The author demonstrates how multi-component testing can reveal uneven reading profiles in adult students and argues that students require very different instructional approaches depending on their profiles. He uses two case studies and summaries of research to outline differences in reading profiles and to underscore the implications for assessment, policy and program design, and appropriate instruction.]

- **Post the newsprint Discussion Questions.**

  Ask the participants to form small groups of three to four people to explore the following questions. Ask the group also to note questions that arise during their discussion that they would like to discuss with the whole group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>What did you see as the key points of this article?</td>
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<td>What evidence do you think the authors gave to back up these practices? What might be the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which of the findings or practices did you find surprising or intriguing? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How might the profiles help you plan better reading instruction for your students?</td>
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- **After 25 minutes, reconvene the whole group.** Each group reports back to the whole group about any observations, questions, or issues that arose from the reading or small group discussion. After each group presents, there should be time allotted for questions and comments from other groups. (This should be encouraged by the facilitator.)

**Break** (15 minutes)
4. ARCS Profiles

- Use the handout *Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles* to guide participants through the “Match a Profile” section of the Web site (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/). Participants use the student assessment data they brought in this activity. Ask the participants to match their student’s assessment data to one of the profiles from the Adult Reading Components Study.

[Note: If the *Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles* Web site is not accessible during the seminar, use the handout *Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles* as an alternative method for demonstrating the content. Make transparencies of the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, or ask participants to review the handout pages together.]

- Ask participants to create an instructional plan for their student based on the information provided on the Web site. The handout *Sample Instructional Plan* provides a template, or participants may choose to use another format. Give participants about 30 minutes to create a plan.

- Reconvene the whole group. Ask participants to briefly describe their students’ profiles and the prepared instructional plans. After each person presents, time should be allotted for questions and comments from other participants.

5. Planning Next Steps for the Group

- Post the newsprint Next Steps. Explain that now that the individual participants have developed an instructional plan to try out in their classrooms, the group should make a plan about the group’s next steps.

**Next Steps**

- How might you share with each other how your instructional plans worked, or how might you ask each other questions?
• **Write up potential next steps** on the newsprint as the participants mention them. After five minutes of brainstorming, ask participants to silently look at the options and individually select two ways for the group to continue the discussions.

• **Hand out two sticky dots to each participant** and ask the group to put their dots next to the one or two ideas that they would most like the group to do. If they don’t want to do any of the activities, they should not put their dots on the newsprint.

• **Lead the group in organizing its choice. For example:**
  
  o If they choose to schedule a follow-up meeting, set the date, time, and place for the meeting, and brainstorm an agenda for the meeting. Determine who will definitely be coming, and who will take the responsibility to cancel the meeting in case of bad weather.

  o If they choose to organize an e-mail list, pass around a sheet for everyone to write their e-mail addresses. Decide who is going to start the first posting, and discuss what types of discussion or postings people would like to see (e.g., questions about how to try out something in their classroom, descriptions of what happened after they tried it, sharing of other resources about assessment strategies and reading profiles, etc.).

6. **Evaluation of the Seminar** (5 minutes)

• **Explain to participants that, in the time left, you would like to get feedback from them about this seminar.** You will use this feedback in shaping future seminars.

• **Post the newsprint Useful/How to Improve.**
Ask participants first to tell you what was useful or helpful to them about the design and content of this seminar. Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “Useful.”

- **Then ask participants for suggestions on how to improve this design and content.** 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 for you not to defend or justify anything you have done in the seminar or anything about the design or content, 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?”

- **Refer participants to the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy’s Web site (www.ncsall.net) for further information.** Point out that most NSCALL publications may be downloaded for free from the Web site. Print versions can be ordered by contacting NSCALL at World Education: ncsall@worlded.org.

- **Thank everyone** for coming and participating in the seminar.
Before joining NCSALL last fall as a researcher, I worked as a reading teacher in adult basic education (ABE) for 11 years at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA. When I began in 1985, our center relied primarily on “quick-and-dirty” silent reading tests to place students in class.

Over the years, however, my colleagues and I began to realize that sensitive, multi-component reading assessment would provide more useful diagnostic and teaching information than silent reading comprehension tests alone. In addition to silent reading, we began doing word analysis (phonics), word recognition, spelling, oral reading, and oral vocabulary assessments with all learners who scored below grade equivalent (GE) 8 on our old test and with any learner reporting a history of serious childhood reading problems.

As we began to use multi-component testing, we noticed that most of our adult basic education (ABE) readers presented very mixed, uneven patterns of strengths and needs across the various components of reading. Some of their reading skills were fairly well-developed, but often many important skills were not. We also began to notice recurring patterns of strengths and needs, and we began to identify typical reader profiles. At the Harvard Adult Literacy Initiative, Professor Jeanne S. Chall had also begun to identify and describe distinctive patterns of strengths and needs among the ABE learners served in her adult reading laboratory (Chall, 1991).

My subsequent research (Strucker, 1995) confirmed this: unlike normally progressing young readers, who, by definition, have relatively even reading profiles—e.g., an “average” fourth grader usually has approximately fourth grade skills across the components of reading—ABE readers tend to have very uneven reading profiles. To put it another way, as Chall (1991) noted, many ABE readers’ profiles resembled those of children who have been diagnosed with reading difficulties.

Why are there so many uneven profiles in ABE? This is a complicated question, but let me suggest a few reasons: Most of our native speakers—up to 78% according to my preliminary research—report they had serious reading
problems when they were children. Therefore, their reading profiles may have begun to develop unevenly in childhood and remained uneven into adulthood. Second-language speakers in ABE classes generally have acceptable print skills, but usually they have not developed commensurate vocabulary levels in English. Moreover, some may not have had sufficient native language education to have developed these concepts in their native languages.

Why is the “unevenness” of ABE readers’ profiles important? Let’s back up for a moment to talk about the reading process. The “print aspects” of reading, like word recognition, and the “meaning aspects” of reading, like comprehension and vocabulary, are thought to support each other interactively (Adams, M.J., 1994). But the converse is also true: significant difficulties in one or more components not only hinder one’s current reading, they may also impede future progress, for adults or children (Curtis, M.E., in press; Roswell & Chall, 1994). For example, if word recognition is slow and inaccurate, the effortless processing of text that enables comprehension to take place may be impaired, despite a reader’s background knowledge, vocabulary, and analytic ability (Perfetti, 1985).

Below, I present case studies of two typical adult learners to illustrate what this notion of “uneven reading profiles” can mean in concrete terms. Both students scored an identical grade equivalent (GE) 4 in silent reading. But, they are very different readers, with very different instructional needs. Their stories highlight two important issues: the value of thorough diagnostic testing that goes beyond silent reading comprehension, and the value of a wider variety of classroom placements than many ABE centers are currently able to offer.

“Richard”

Born in a city near Boston, Richard was 24 when I met him. He enrolled in our center to earn a high school degree in order to enlist in the military. His K-12 schooling featured many interruptions because his family moved frequently during his childhood: “I was never in kindergarten at all and during first, second, and third grade we moved all the time. [Teachers] didn’t really deal with my reading problems because by the time they noticed them, we had moved....I’m still very hurt to this day....If I’d had an education, I could have done anything.”

Richard’s teachers eventually did notice his reading problems, and he was placed in special education classes from middle school on. In high school he was a popular, outgoing student, earning varsity letters in football and basketball. Because he was bright and well-spoken, his friends assumed he would go on to college, perhaps even with an athletic scholarship. In reality, however, Richard’s reading had remained stalled at primary school levels.
In the middle of his junior year, his mother moved the family to Florida. Richard re-enrolled in school there, but he began to work long hours after school to help support the family. He soon dropped out to take on a 40-hour-per-week schedule in a fast food restaurant.

A year later, he returned to the Boston area. He has worked in a number of jobs since then, including security guard, restaurant worker and cook, and clothing salesman.

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<tr>
<th>Richard’s DAR Scores</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Word Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>GE 1.5*</td>
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*GE 3 is the highest extrapolated score possible for word analysis

Above are his intake scores on the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR) (Roswell & Chall, 1992). Richard’s grade equivalent (GE) scores should not automatically be interpreted to mean that he is “identical to a first-grader in word analysis” or “identical to a sixth-grader” in oral vocabulary. The miscue patterns of an adult such as Richard and those of a child can often be very different. In vocabulary, for example, Richard probably knows many words, learned through his work experience, that a sixth grader might not know, while a sixth grader might know many school-based words that Richard may have had trouble reading as a child. This doesn’t mean that grade equivalents are meaningless. If analyzed together, GE’s can serve to indicate areas of relative strength and weakness. Notice, for example, that Richard’s “print skills”—word analysis, word recognition, and spelling—were much weaker than his “meaning-related skills”—oral reading, comprehension, and oral vocabulary.

Looking within each test tells us more. My test notes reveal that Richard’s word analysis skills were spotty and uncertain: he was able to produce all of the consonant sounds, but many only with great difficulty and some in a distorted, guttural form. He was unable to isolate short vowel sounds and unable to read unfamiliar short vowel words, silent “e”, double vowel, and r-controlled vowel words accurately. Richard’s spelling miscues paralleled his word analysis errors: a few single vowel words were spelled correctly, but those with double vowels (trian for train; chier for chair) were not.

His word recognition miscues involved guesses based on the first few letters of a word and its overall shape, again with much uncertainty about vowels: witch for watch, courage for carriage, nicest for notice. Several times
during testing I reminded Richard to take his time, but he persisted in attempting to read rapidly, even at the sacrifice of accuracy.

Richard’s oral reading miscues were similar to those in word recognition: midnight for middle, old for odd. He was able to use the context to monitor and self-correct some of his mistakes. His self-corrections did not affect his scored mastery level, but they did slow down his reading and make it appear very labored. Although he mastered GE 4, even his GE 2 oral reading was not fluent; it contained several self-corrections, hesitations, and repetitions.

Silent reading comprehension was an area of relative strength for Richard, but he took more than ten minutes to read and answer four questions on the 100-word GE 4 passage. Oral vocabulary at GE 6 was Richard’s strongest skill. Some responses, however, reflected his word analysis and phonological difficulties: for *console*—”When you put something where you can’t see it....” while others were vague and imprecise: for *environment*—”A place you like....” It is important to measure vocabulary orally; written vocabulary tests may conflate vocabulary with word recognition when used with people who have decoding problems.

Richard’s silent reading and vocabulary scores taken alone might have led to his placement in an intermediate reading class that would have concentrated on silent reading comprehension, vocabulary, and basic expository writing. Instead, Richard’s severe difficulties with decoding and spelling (as shown in the DAR word analysis, word recognition, spelling and oral reading tests) led to his placement in a class which focused on helping students develop reading fluency and accuracy. This class covered the decoding and spelling of double-vowel syllables and polysyllabic words, and it included lots of opportunities for the oral reading of connected texts—especially stories, poems, and plays, which Richard particularly enjoyed.

Even though silent reading comprehension skills were not emphasized in this class, after five months Richard began to score at or above GE 6 in silent reading on the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) and ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Exam), if they were not timed. Both the TABE and ABLE were normed on ABE adults. They employ the familiar format of short passages followed by multiple-choice questions. The TABE is timed and the ABLE is not timed. (For more on reading tests, see the box on page 16) It appeared that his modest progress in the “print aspects” of reading had begun to help Richard unlock his strengths in the “meaning aspects” of reading.

The happy ending to Richard’s story has yet to be written. After a year in our center, he began to work two jobs to help support his mother when she became ill. Reluctantly, he had to drop his ABE classes. As in childhood,
Richard’s education had again been interrupted, but at least he had proved to himself that he could make significant progress.

“Vanessa”

When I met Vanessa she was 24 and the mother of a three-year-old. She had been referred by the state’s welfare-to-work program to brush up her academic skills so she could go on to job training. Born in Lima, Peru, Vanessa remembered knowing how to read before she entered school, “...because my mom showed me.” She reported no trouble with reading or any other school subjects throughout her nine years of schooling in Peru. In Lima she even studied “basic English,” but, she recalled, “...whatever they taught us there, it was nothing like real English here [in the US].” When she was 15, her family moved to Massachusetts, and Vanessa was immediately placed, at her father’s insistence, in regular, as opposed to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or bilingual, ninth grade classes in an urban high school. “That first year...I got no tutoring or anything. Lucky for me there were other Spanish-speaking kids in the class, from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. They explained things and translated, but that first year I just picked up English by listening to people and watching TV.”

The next year, she enrolled in a different high school, where “...I got ESOL classes for three years, and it really helped.” At the same time she was taking and passing commercial courses in English, but becoming increasingly bored with school: “I quit when I was a senior, with only three months to go... [because] my boyfriend decided to quit, so I followed. I went to a beauty academy to be a beautician. They got me loans to pay for tuition. But they just think of the money. I finished the course, but I couldn’t pass the written licensing test in English. Now I still owe them $9,000! Then I got pregnant with my daughter and couldn’t work anymore.”

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<td>GE 2-3*</td>
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<td>GE 4</td>
<td>GE 4</td>
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*GE 3 is the highest extrapolated score possible for word analysis

Above is Vanessa’s reading profile, based on the same DAR tests administered to Richard. We notice immediately that even though Vanessa and Richard had identical comprehension scores at GE 4, their profiles are nearly the reverse of each other. Vanessa’s reading was relatively stronger in the “print aspects” as compared to the “meaning aspects,” while Richard’s strengths lay in the “meaning aspects” as compared to the “print aspects.”
Vanessa’s word analysis skills, while somewhat rusty, seemed relatively intact. Her word recognition score almost hit the GE 6 level, with most of her miscues involving the use of Spanish pronunciation rules on English words: fahvorahblay for favorable and streaking for striking. Her oral reading errors followed this pattern closely. In contrast to Richard, whose oral reading lacked fluency well below mastery level, Vanessa’s oral reading remained fluent even above her mastery level. Vanessa’s own analysis of her miscues made sense: she explained that since leaving high school she had spoken mostly Spanish at home, watched Spanish-language TV, and read mostly Spanish newspapers and magazines. Her English reading had suffered for lack of practice.

Vanessa’s silent reading comprehension at GE 4—which she mastered—and GE 5—which she almost mastered—only took a few minutes, compared to Richard’s ten. She lamented that she couldn’t use a Spanish/English dictionary. Her oral vocabulary, also at GE 4, suggested that a dictionary might have helped. As the English words on the test got harder, Vanessa’s definitions grew vaguer, even when they were counted as correct: environment—“What’s going on in the world, like smoke....”

Vanessa’s profile led us to place her in a different class from Richard. She was enrolled in an intermediate reading class which concentrated on advanced decoding skills, writing, vocabulary, and silent reading comprehension. In addition to this class, Vanessa and other non-native speakers of English received one class per week taught by an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) specialist. This class focused on the specific needs of people like Vanessa. These learners are fluent speakers of English, but they often need special instruction in the vocabulary and syntax of written English—e.g., uses of signal words like therefore, despite, however,
although—and in how to transfer metalinguistic knowledge acquired in their native language to English—e.g., that the English suffixes -tion, -ed and -ly correspond to the Spanish suffixes -ción, -ado(a), and -mente, respectively.

Vanessa’s story has a happy ending. She made rapid progress in our center, largely because she was able to regain and enhance her neglected English reading and writing skills. Within five months she had transferred to a combined office-skills/GED program, and, following that, to a prestigious secretarial school. Last summer I met Vanessa on the street and learned more good news: she and her boyfriend have married, they have a second child, and he has landed a good job with benefits. And, with obvious pride, Vanessa reported that she has used her combined Spanish and English literacy skills to obtain her “dream job” as a bilingual medical secretary.

**Patterns of Adult Reading**

In *Patterns of Reading in ABE* (1995), John Strucker tested and interviewed a sample of 120 ABE readers designed to resemble the learners in the Massachusetts ABE system as a whole. Students were tested with the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR). The 120 DAR component profile scores were subjected to computer cluster analysis. Nine instructionally-meaningful clusters of ABE learners emerged, ranging from beginners all the way up to those at GED levels.

Here are some of Strucker’s findings in brief.

- The ABE readers were quite diverse, especially at intermediate levels (GE 4-7), with five distinct clusters identified.
- Most learners had relatively “uneven” profiles of strengths and needs, with only about five percent of the learners displaying the relatively “even” profiles associated with normally developing young readers.
- Native speakers tended to have relatively stronger “meaning-based skills” as compared to “print-based skills,” while non-native speakers exhibited the opposite pattern. Chall (1991) reported similar findings.
- The number of native speakers with reading difficulties in childhood was surprisingly high. Seventy eight percent reported formal recognition of their problems by school authorities and subsequent placement in either remedial reading or learning disabilities classes.
- Many native speakers at all levels tended to have difficulty with oral reading fluency, even below their eventual levels of mastery, suggesting that they were having difficulty processing text efficiently and effortlessly.
Many second-language speakers in ABE classes had surprisingly low levels of oral vocabulary in English (GE 2 to GE 4), despite their fluent levels of conversational English. Similarly low levels of oral vocabulary occurred among some inner-city young adults who were native speakers.

In Conclusion

These brief case studies highlight a number of inter-related points for ABE teachers, administrators, and policy makers to consider.

Given that ABE readers are so diverse and their profiles are so uneven, shouldn’t sensitive, multi-component diagnostic testing be done with all learners? This testing does not need to be time-consuming, expensive, or burdensome for the learners. The DAR, for example, takes about 40 minutes to administer, and most teachers can learn to use it with just a few hours of training. Most students enjoy the one-on-one attention and instant feedback which tests like the DAR provide.

Does our current array of classes allow us to offer very different readers, like Richard and Vanessa, the different kinds of help they need? Like other ABE teachers, I have struggled to teach learners with very widely divergent needs in the same class. It can be done if the teacher recognizes who those learners are and what their needs are, but it entails a terrible sacrifice of their limited and precious instructional time. To put it another way, attempting to teach “Richards” and “Vanessas” at the same time involves cutting in half the instructional time available to each type of learner.

What can we do about this situation? More money to offer a wider range of classes would certainly help. But we may want to explore some organizational changes as well. In urban and suburban areas, small programs might consider merging to create larger, more versatile centers. Or, they might consider a division of responsibilities in which each small center might specialize in a certain level type of learner, and then refer readers of other types and levels to cooperating centers which specialized in teaching those learners.

Richard and Vanessa represent only two typical ABE reading profiles, but there may be as many as ten to 12 instructionally-relevant reading profiles in the ABE learner population as a whole. And we know even less about the reading profiles of ESOL learners. Just as reading teachers need to know more about each student we teach, the field as a whole needs to know more about the different types readers who come to our centers. Only then will we be able to match our teaching and class placements to their needs. To that end, my
colleagues and I at NCSALL, in partnership with practitioners around the country, will be giving basic diagnostic assessments, including the DAR, to a national sample of about 500 learners to create composite portraits of the various kinds of readers we meet in ABE.

These diagnostic portraits of ABE readers can then be used to inform the work of fine-tuning and, where necessary, redesigning our instructional approaches and class placements. But while we’re doing this, we can’t afford to neglect our traditional commitment to developing curriculum that is relevant, culturally inclusive, and mindful of adult experience and cognitive skills. It’s an exciting time for practitioners and researchers in ABE reading, a time when the field will be moving forward on many fronts simultaneously.

Tests of Reading

The Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR) measures word analysis (phonics), word recognition (graded word lists), spelling, oral reading (graded short passages), comprehension (short graded passages followed by questions and an oral summary) and oral vocabulary. It is administered one-on-one with ample opportunity for feedback and discussion with the learner. It is criterion-referenced in that learners are given opportunities to master increasingly harder material until they reach their highest mastery level. The DAR reading comprehension tests are not timed.

The DAR is very “user-friendly” for teachers and students because of its clear directions and convenient format. Teachers can measure the same components of reading using other batteries, such as the Woodcock-Johnson Language Proficiency Battery Revised (Riverside, 1990). Or, they can assemble their own diagnostic batteries from tests they already own; e.g., using the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) for word recognition and spelling, the Gray Oral Reading Test for oral reading, a standardized silent reading test like the TABE, ABLE, or Nelson for comprehension, and an oral vocabulary measure such as the ABLE 1, or the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. See Chall, J.S. & Curtis, M.E. (1990) and Roswell, F. and Chall, J.S. (1994) for more on diagnostic achievement testing in reading.

Tests


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**References**


Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles

This Web site, supported by the National Institute for Literacy, builds on the work of the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS). The site provides a mini-course on assessment and instruction of reading components, tests and word lists that can be downloaded, and links to research. Additionally, the Web site offers the opportunity for instructors to match their own students’ reading profiles with student profiles developed using ARCS data and to make instructional choices based on the information.

Go to www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/. You should see the following page:

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. When you are ready to go on, choose the button at the bottom that states, Click to Go to Match a Profile.

[Note: Later, you may want to come back to this page to try the other section of the Web site, “Take the Mini-Course.” You access it by clicking on the other red button, “Click to Take the Mini-Course.”]
Components? Reading Profiles?  
What Are They??

Because you can read efficiently, it is easy to forget that reading is a skill that is made possible by several sub-skills, or components, working together. On this website, we have selected five of the components to picture different patterns of reading strengths and weaknesses:

- word recognition
- spelling
- word meaning
- reading comprehension
- oral reading rate

A picture of a reader’s abilities on the component skills is called a “reading profile.” It can be presented in several ways:

Here is an example of a reading profile presented as a table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Skill (Component)</th>
<th>Score (Grade Equivalent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Recognition</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Meaning (Vocabulary)</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Rate</td>
<td>120 words per minute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can also use bar graphs to present the same reading profiles. (The graph Oral Reading Rate separately because it is measured in different units—wpm versus GLE.) Here is the sample reading profile presented as bar graphs:

Sample Reading Profile:  
Oral Reading Rate in Words per Minute (wpm)

Sample Reading Profile:  
Graph showing word recognition, spelling, and word meaning (vocabulary) in grade equivalent

Why Are Reading Profiles Important?

* Profiles provide a guide for instruction. Once a teacher has assessed a learner’s reading skills, he or she can then direct instruction to those skills that need strengthening.

* Profiles illustrate a learner’s pattern of scores on skills that underlie reading ability.

* Profiles are a tool for classroom practitioners and programs. Learners with similar strengths and needs can be grouped for more focused instruction.

Click here to go to “Assessment is More Than a Silent Reading Text” next.

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, Click here to go to “Assessment is More Than a Silent Reading Text” next.
You should see the following page, scrolling down to see all of the information.

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, Click here to go to the “Introduction to Match a Profile” next.
You should see the following page, scrolling down to see all of the information.

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, click here to make a match!
You should see the following page, scrolling down to see all of the information.

**Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles**

**Enter Scores to Make a Match**

Please enter your learner's scores in the form below to be matched to one of eleven research-based reading profiles.

Not sure how to get these test scores for your learner? Here are some suggestions:

- **Word Recognition**: Does your program use a word recognition test, such as the Quick Oral Reading Test (QORT) for placement? If so, please use that QORT score. Or, do you use tests such as the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) or the Woodcock-Johnson battery? If so, you can use their word recognition subtests. If not, you can check with your local K-12 school for any language or spelling programs. If you are not sure if your school offers any spelling programs, you can check with your local K-12 school for ideas on spelling programs. These are very few learners who spell at or above their word recognition level so start with words in these word recognition GE or one or two GE levels below. Proceed up or down the word recognition let until they can correctly spell at least three words on a list. The GE you decide to enter will be an approximation of the learner’s spelling mastery.

- **Spelling**: If your program uses the Kiddie Spelling assessment, you can give oral spelling assessment. You can use the spelling subtest of either the WRAT or the Woodcock-Johnson battery. None of these is an option; you can check with your local K-12 school for ideas on spelling programs. If you are not sure if your school offers any spelling programs, you can check with your local K-12 school for ideas on spelling programs. These are very few learners who spell at or above their word recognition level so start with words in these word recognition GE or one or two GE levels below. Proceed up or down the word recognition let until they can correctly spell at least three words on a list. The GE you decide to enter will be an approximation of the learner’s spelling mastery.

- **Word Meaning**: We have developed a word meaning test and put it on this website for you to download and use. Click here to learn more about the free word meaning test.

- **Silent Reading Comprehension**: Your program should already have a silent reading comprehension test score for each learner.

- **Oral Reading Rate**: Click here to see how to calculate your learner’s oral reading rate.

You must enter all scores for the analysis to work properly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Recognition</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Word Meaning</th>
<th>Silent Reading</th>
<th>Oral Reading Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.0 - 12.0 CE</td>
<td>0.0 - 12.0 CE</td>
<td>0.0 - 10.0 CE</td>
<td>0.0 - 12.0 CE</td>
<td>Words per Minute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Perform Analysis](image)

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. This page and its related links provide you with information on the assessment tools to use and their related scores. You were asked to bring student assessment data for a student with whom you work. That’s the data that you will want to enter in the box at the bottom of the page. Make sure that you answer all the questions before clicking on the button, Perform Analysis.

[Note: If you forgot to bring Student Assessment Data, use the following scores on Handout 2, Student Assessment Data.]
The scores you entered most closely match Profile 7, one of the three profiles in the Low Intermediate Group.

**Profile 7: “HIGH PRINT SKILLS (ALPHABETICS)”**

Low Intermediate Group - Silent Reading GE 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Recognition</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Word Meaning (Vocabulary)</th>
<th>Silent Reading</th>
<th>Oral Reading Rate (wpm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Profile Description Menu**

- Your Learners Profile and the Description of the ARCS Comparison Profile 7
- Suggestions for Instruction for Profile 7 Learners
- Additional Profile 7 Information from the Research

Your Learners Profile and the Description of the ARCS Comparison Profile 7

- **ARCS Comparison Profile 7** is part of the Low Intermediate Group. The Low Intermediate Group is made up of three profiles (7 - 9) whose members scored between Grade Equivalent (GE) 3-5 on the Oral Silent Reading Comprehension subtest.
- **Print skills (alphabetic)** (Word Recognition and Spelling) are significantly higher than their reading skills (Word Meaning and Comprehension).

**Average Scores**

Average scores for each component on the five reading components are shown in the table below. You will also see a line graph with your learner’s profile and the Profile 7 average. In both cases (the table and the line graph), all scores except oral reading rate are given in GE. We explain Oral Reading Rate further down this page—keep scrolling.

Not each component has its own average score based on the particular range of learner’s scores; each component also has its own range of lowest scores. The scores given in the “Start of Lowest Range” could mark the beginning of the lowest range for each component. Learners who score below these are those performing in the lowest 15% of all learners.

**Profile 7: “HIGH ALPHABETICS SKILLS”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Component</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
<th>Your Learner’s Score</th>
<th>Start of Lowest Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Recognition</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Meaning</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Rate (wpm)</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Oral Reading Rate**

On the bar graph below, your learner’s oral reading rate is shown in red. The average oral reading rate for Profile 7 members is shown in blue.

Please keep in mind... that adults and college students show an average minimum oral reading rate (reading aloud accurately) as fast as possible of about 200 - 220 words per minute (wpm).
Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, Suggestions for Instruction for Profile X Learners.
You should see a page that is similar to this one. Remember to scroll down to see all of the information.

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, Additional Profile X Information from the Research.
You should see a page that is similar to this one. Remember to scroll down to see all of the information.

```
ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND READING PROFILES

Match a Profile:
1. Introduction to Reading Profiles and Reading Communities
2. Assessment is More Than a Silent Reading Test
3. Introduction to Match a Profile
4. Other Women to Make a Profile
   - You’re matched Profile 7
5. Comparison of the Three Profiles in the Low Intermediate Group
6. Return to Analysis Page to Order a New Set of Scores

ACCOUNTING AND INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS (ONE PER PAGE)

NCSALL 29

The scores you entered most closely match Profile 7, one of the three profiles in the Low Intermediate Group.

Profile 7: “HIGH PRINT SKILLS (ALPHABETICS)”
Low Intermediate Group - Silent Reading GE 3-5

Profile Description Menu:
- Your Learner’s Profile and the ACCS Comparison Profile 7
- Suggestion for Instruction for Profile 7 Learners
- Additional Profile 7 Information from the Research
- Comparison of the Three Profiles in the Low Intermediate Group
- Return to Analysis Page to Order a New Set of Scores

Additional Profile 7 Information from the Research

In addition to testing the reading skills of ESL learners, the ACCS researchers administered a lengthy questionnaire, so we can give you more information about the people in Profile 7.

- Forty-one (41) percent are native speakers of English (NS).
- The average age is 37.
- The average number of grades completed is 10.1.

Summary of self-reported reading problems:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trouble Reading, K-12</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble Learning to Read, K-2</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets Academic Help, K-12</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Access to these scores can be included for an extra $20.00 or $20.00 ($20.00). 6% = Learning or Chapter 1 and Special Classes.

We know that if a native speaker of English (NS) born in the U.S. is in the able system and reading between GE 3-5, he/she is probably reading or listening disabled. Forty-one percent of Profile 7 NS learners received academic assistance in K-12.

```
Oral Reading Accuracy:
- Profile 7 learners read orally with accuracy (not timed) at a group average of GE 3-5. Readers are usually able to decode words and pronounce words correctly, when they can use meaning to recognize familiar words, rather than using visual memory. Some people with low scores have more difficulty with this.
- The major prerequisite skill is word recognition beyond sight word acquisition is phonetic awareness. A high percentage of readers in this group scored in the average range on reading speedwords to “word” recognition, comprehension of phonetic letters, and syllable combinations, e.g., as a word producer and of common non-phonetic letter and syllable combinations, e.g., ph. Profile 7 learners are able to decode most of the letters and syllable combinations that make up real English words.

Reading Comprehension and Word Meaning (Vocabulary):
- Profile 7 readers are probably able to decode material they do not understand. Their relatively low level of comprehension, low scored and (less expressive) word meaning (context, support for this observation)
- Receptive (listening) vocabulary: scores range from a few non-native speakers of English (NNS) to the “extremely low,” most in the “moderately low,” a few in the “low average” range. The WRAT-II assesses word knowledge by asking the learner to select one or four pictures that best reflect a word by the examiner. It is an assessment of vocabulary.

Three quarters of the group, NNS and NSL, have less school-based information about the world than people in the general population. They do not have enough background information on social studies or science to provide frameworks for new information.

Profile 7 learners will benefit by a program centered on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension strategies. Such a focus will encourage their outside reading as they bring their meaning skills more in line with their alphabetic abilities. If they can other their reading comprehension they will be ready for a high intermediate curriculum. In addition, continued development of the print skills (alphabetic), especially spelling, will provide them with solid tools for writing as well as reading.

Profile Description Menu:
- Your Learner’s Profile and the ACCS Comparison Profile 7
- Suggestion for Instruction for Profile 7 Learners
- Additional Profile 7 Information from the Research
- Comparison of the Three Profiles in the Low Intermediate Group
- Return to Analysis Page to Order a New Set of Scores
```

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. Go on when you are ready by clicking on the text, Comparison of the Three Profiles in the X Group.
You should see a page that is similar to this one. Remember to scroll down to see all of the information.

Read the information and feel free to explore any of the links on the page, usually underlined, blue font. This concludes the Match a Profile Track of the Web site.
Student Assessment Data

If you did not bring student assessment data for a student with you whom you work, use the following scores:

- Word Recognition: GE 8.9
- Spelling: GE 3.6
- Word Meaning: GE 7.2
- Silent Reading Comprehension: GE 5.2
- Oral Reading Rate: 45 WPM

GE: grade equivalent
WPM: words per minute
Sample Instructional Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning objective(s):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Skills</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonemics:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Recognition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Sight Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Word Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Rate and Fluency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Instructional Plan (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Skills</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials and Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Word Meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Background Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Silent Reading Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework:

Student Comments:

Instructor Notes:
Information About NCSALL

NCSALL’s Mission
NCSALL’s purpose is to improve practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. NCSALL is meeting this purpose through basic and applied research, dissemination of research findings, and leadership within the field of adult learning and literacy.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort among the Harvard Graduate School of Education, World Education, The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Institute of Education Sciences (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

NCSALL’s Research Projects
The goal of NCSALL’s research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) student motivation, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) staff development, and (4) assessment.

Dissemination Initiative
NCSALL’s dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and scholars of adult education can access, understand, judge, and use research findings. NCSALL publishes Focus on Basics, a quarterly magazine for practitioners; Focus on Policy, a twice-yearly magazine for policymakers; Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research, and best practices; and NCSALL Reports and Occasional Papers, periodic publications of research reports and articles. In addition, NCSALL sponsors the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research Initiative, designed to help practitioners and policymakers apply findings from research in their instructional settings and programs.

For more information about NCSALL, to download free copies of our publications, or to purchase bound copies, please visit our Web site at:

www.ncsall.net