Training Guide:

Study Circle Facilitators

July 2006

NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

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CONTENTS

ABOUT NCSALL STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS TRAINING

Who created this study circle facilitators training?

This training guide was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The guide is part of NCSALL's effort to help connect research and practice in the field of adult education and family literacy. The *Training Guide: Study Circle Facilitators* is one of a series of teaching and training materials that NCSALL has developed.

Why was this study circle facilitators training created?

NCSALL study circles are designed to be facilitated by any experienced adult education practitioner. While facilitator training is not necessary, the training offers practice and support.

The purpose of this guide is to help experienced professional developers and others organize and conduct professional development that trains facilitators of NCSALL study circles. Facilitators of the study circle facilitators training should be experienced trainers. This guide includes the information and materials you will need to conduct the training, but not background information on planning and facilitating training.

A NCSALL study circle is a professional development activity for adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), or adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) practitioners. The study circles are designed to bring practitioners together to:

- Read research articles presenting findings from adult education studies

- Discuss the relevance of the findings for the students with whom they work

- Discuss strategies for applying the findings in their classrooms and programs

- Make plans for trying strategies or changing their practice

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research. We want to ensure that practitioners—teachers, counselors, program administrators, and others—have an opportunity to access, understand, judge, and use research in their work. Therefore, the goal of the NCSALL study circle facilitators training is to train new facilitators. Participants will understand NCSALL efforts to connect research and practice, understand how study circles support these efforts, and learn how to facilitate a study circle.

When we have talked to practitioners in the field of adult literacy about research, they ask for techniques, strategies, and practical suggestions that they can use immediately. Yet, research often produces reports, articles, and other documents that provide primarily findings, theories, concepts, ideas, and sometimes implications for practice. NCSALL believes that there should be a process that "translates" research findings into practical suggestions and that practitioners should be involved in that process. The prime vehicles for translating research into practical suggestions for practitioners are professional development activities such as practitioner research training and study circles, where practitioners can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:

Research produces:
Theories, concepts, and findings in
- Articles
- Reports
- Presentations

Practitioners need:
Techniques, strategies, and suggestions in
- Articles
- Workshops
- Web sites

Translation through:
Study circles and professional development which produce practical recommendations for instruction and policy
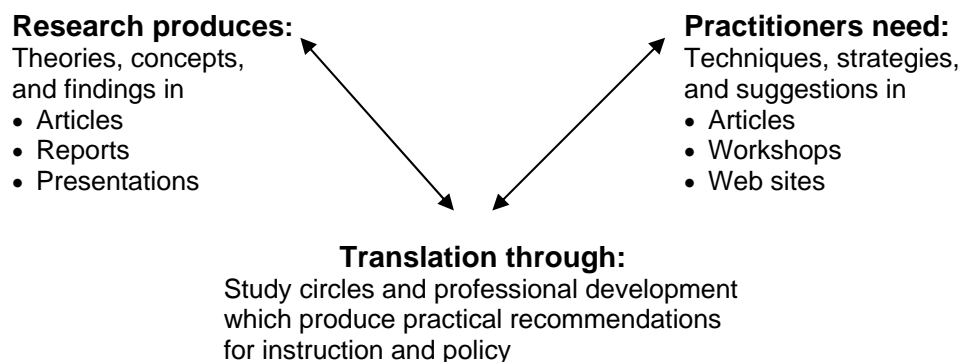
What is the study circle facilitators training?

Study circle facilitators training is a professional development activity to train facilitators of NCSALL study circles who will then facilitate study circles for practitioners (teachers, tutors, counselors, support staff, and program administrators) from programs that

provide adult students with adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education services.

This training uses the topic of reading and focuses on the NCSALL study circle on research-based adult reading instruction. However, the training can be adapted to prepare facilitators for NCSALL study circles in general or on another topic. If you are adapting the study circle facilitators training, substitute similar activities from other study circle guides and prepare materials accordingly. If you are doing a general training, have a variety of study circle guides with enough for each person. If you are preparing for a particular study circle, have copies of that study circle guide for each participant.

The study circle facilitators training on the topic of reading uses the format depicted below:

Participants will:
- Learn about ways teachers approach research and reflect on their own thinking about research

- List features of effective professional development and study circles

- Examine NCSALL's *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (or a study circle guide on another topic)

- Participate in and talk about typical study circle activities— introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Consider how to handle problem participants and other challenges in facilitating study circles

- Review the next steps and logistics for facilitating a study circle in their programs, regions, and/or states

What should the outcomes of the study circle facilitators training be?

We hope that the participants will understand NCSALL efforts to connect research and practice and how study circles support these efforts. Also, we hope the participants will learn how to facilitate NCSALL study circles.

If participants leave the group with a clear plan for facilitating a study circle, the study circle facilitator training is a success.

Who should participate?

The study circle facilitator training is designed for any practitioner who works in an adult education program: teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, or others. It is broad enough to be of interest to ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners who work in a variety of delivery settings: community-based organizations, local educational authorities, libraries, correctional facilities, etc. The design of the study circle facilitator training and the readings should be appropriate for both new and experienced practitioners.

The training is designed for approximately 20 participants who will be serving as study circle facilitators.

How long is the study circle facilitator training?

The study circle facilitator training is designed for one, six-hour session and includes one-hour for lunch.

How do I recruit participants?

NCSALL has produced a sample flyer that provides information about this NCSALL study circle facilitator training, which you can find on page 7. The flyer presents an overview of the topic and a brief description about what will be covered in the training. It also includes a registration form for practitioners to mail back to you.

You are welcome to use the flyer to send out via mail or on a Web site to let practitioners know when and where the study circle facilitator training will be taking place. Or, you can create your own flyer, using the NCSALL flyer as an example.

How do I organize the training?

When you feel that you have solid commitments from the number of participants you are seeking, contact them to confirm their participation in the study circle facilitators training. At this time, reconfirm the times, date, and location of the study circle facilitators training with the participants.

As mentioned above, this study circle facilitators training has been designed for a group of practitioners to meet for one

session that is a day long. Because one session's worth of time is such a limited period for a group to meet, we suggest that several short readings and a brief cover letter with information about the study circle facilitators training be sent to practitioners to read before the training.

After confirming their participation, send each participant the packet of information and materials to read before the training (Pre-meeting Packet of readings and handouts on pages 17-38). Participants need to receive this packet at least 10 days before the training.

You, as the facilitator, will also want to review the entire guide and read over the Pre-meeting Packet so that you are ready for the training and for questions that participants may have. You need to be familiar with all of the readings and with facilitating study circles.

One of the final activities in this training is a review of the plans for study circles in the participants'' particular programs, regions, or states. You will need to be certain that you have the information or that someone who does participates in the training.

Be sure that you arrive early for the training in order to set up the room; arrange your newsprint; and organize handouts, pens, tapes, etc. It's nice to have some sort of refreshment, such as juice, coffee, or water. Check out where the restrooms are so you can tell participants where they are located, and make sure the heating or cooling in the room is appropriate.

Always bring at least two or three extra copies of the readings for participants who forget to bring their own. You should have (or compile during the training) a list of participants and their telephone numbers or e-mail addresses so participants can contact one another after the training.

What kind of support can I expect?

If you want to discuss the study circle facilitators training beforehand with someone from NCSALL, we'd be happy to do so. We can be reached at:

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We'd love to hear how it went so that we can improve this and other trainings we produce in the future. We welcome your feedback about how this NCSALL study circle facilitators training guide worked and how it could be improved. Contact us (telephone, e-mail, or letter) and tell us how it went and what you'd do differently next time.

(SAMPLE FLYER)

Study Circle Facilitators Training

Interested in facilitating a study circle on research-based adult reading instruction (or another topic)?

Questions about what research says about teaching adults and organizing programs are particularly relevant as programs and teachers struggle with choosing the most effective ways to develop adults' skills. **[*insert* name of your organization]** is sponsoring a study circle facilitators training to train participants to conduct study circles.

In this study circle facilitators training, you will understand NCSALL's efforts to connect research and practice and how study circles support these efforts. You, together with other practitioners, will meet to:

- Learn about the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice

- Experience typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges

- Use the *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*

- Prepare to organize and facilitate a study circle in your state, region, or program

The study circle facilitators training is organized into one, six-hour training. We ask that you attend the entire training.

During the training you will examine teachers' attitudes toward research, explore the study circle guide on research-based adult reading instruction, list the challenges and supports of facilitating study circles, and address some facilitation challenges.

The study circle facilitators training is a staff development activity. Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) or Professional Development Points (PDPs) may be available.

The date and location of the study circle facilitators training is:

_____

If you would like to join the study circle facilitators training, please complete this form and send it to: **[*insert* facilitator's name], [*insert* facilitator's address]** by **[*insert* deadline].** I can also be reached at **[*insert* facilitator's phone number]** and **[*insert* facilitator's e-mail].**

Name: _____ Position: _____

Home address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Work telephone:_____ E-mail: _____

ABOUT THE STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS TRAINING GUIDE

What is the study circle facilitators training guide?

This guide includes all of the information and materials you will need to conduct the study circle facilitators training, including:

- A page listing the preparations you need to make before the training. This includes the newsprints to be made, the handouts and readings to photocopy, and the materials to bring.

- A step-by-step guide of the activities for the training and the approximate time for each activity, as well as facilitator notes and other ideas for conducting the activities. Handouts and readings, ready for photocopying, are included at the end of the training.

The study circle guide that participants will need (either *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* or the guide your have chosen) to read or review is not included in this training guide. Obtain a copy for each participant to use during the training, or ask participants to obtain their own copies by downloading or purchasing them.

- *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (order paper copy at $33.00/copy on the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net/?id=674, or download free from the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net/?id=910)

It is important that discussions and activities meet the needs of all group members. As the facilitator, you need to be flexible and may need to modify some activities to fit the needs and learning styles of participants. This study circle facilitators training guide should be used as a *guide,* not a rigid script.

How is the guide organized

There are two main sections in this guide:

1. The introduction *About Study Circle Facilitators Training* and *About the Study Circle Facilitators Training Guide* that you are reading now

2. *Steps for Facilitating the Study Circle Facilitators Training,* which include:

    -   *To Do Before the Training*

    -   *Steps for Facilitating the Training* and *Handouts*

The steps include how-to instructions for conducting all the activities in the training and:

-   the newsprints that need to be prepared beforehand, denoted by the icon ▭ and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being underlined

-   the handouts that need to be photocopied beforehand, denoted by the icon ▯ and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being *italicized*

-   the readings to be photocopied and handed out to read before the training, denoted by the icon 📖 and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being **bolded**

The training includes an evaluation activity to conduct at the end to get feedback from the participants about what was useful and what could be improved.

At the end of the steps, there is a "Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating the Training," which you can pull out of the notebook and take to the training as an easy reference guide for conducting each activity. It looks like this:

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating the Training	
1. Welcome and Introductions	*10mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Everyone introduces themselves.
- Housekeeping and logistics.

What if I want to change the activities listed in the guide?

This guide is intended to help first-time training facilitators who want a lot of guidance. It is, however, not intended to be a script that must be followed. If you have a different idea for how to do an activity, you should use it. To help you, throughout the steps, we have included the following features:

Another Idea for several of the activities, which look like the sample at right when you see them in the steps

Another Idea
(sample)

Note to Facilitator, which look like the sample box at right when you see them in the steps
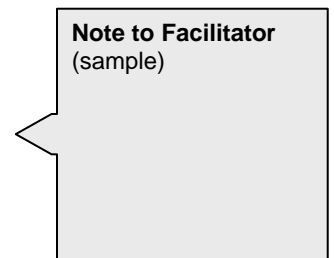
Questions to prompt discussion are provided for you throughout the guide, and they look like this when you see them in the steps:

? How would you...?

Note to Facilitator
(sample)

How is the study circle facilitator training organized?

Participants are introduced to attitudes about research, experience typical study circle activities on the topic of reading, and plan for facilitating a study circle in their own states, regions, or programs.

The **objectives** state that, by the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Explain the connection between research and practice and how study circles support this connection

- Name the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice

- Facilitate typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges

- Utilize the NCSALL *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (or the guide you have chosen)

- Prepare, organize, and facilitate a study circle in their states, regions, or programs

The **main activities** include:

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Objectives and Agenda

3. Attitudes on Research

4. What Is a Study Circle?

5. Examining Research Findings

6. Overview of Study Circle Guide

7. Challenges and Supports: A Force Field Analysis

8. Addressing Facilitation Challenges

9. Logistics and Next Steps

10. Evaluation

Steps for Facilitating the Study Circle Facilitators Training

TO DO BEFORE THE TRAINING

Send out the Pre-Meeting Packet to confirmed participants two weeks before the training. It's also a good idea to call participants one week before the training to confirm that they received the packet.

The Pre-Meeting Packet for the Study Circle Facilitators Training should include the six items listed below, all of which follow and are ready for photocopying.

We suggest that you organize the handouts and readings for participants in two-sided pocket folders and distribute a folder of materials to each participant.

A reminder about the cover letter: You will need to write into the letter the places, dates, and times of the training; information about stipends and travel expenses; and your telephone number and e-mail address and sign it before you make copies.

Contents of Pre-Meeting Packet

- Information About the Study Circle Facilitators Training (cover letter)

- Agenda and Objectives

- NCSALL

- NCSALL Study Circles: The Basics

- Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS)

- The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY CIRCLE FACILITATORS TRAINING

Date:

Dear Participant:

Thank you for registering to participate in the Study Circle Facilitator Training. I really look forward to meeting with you. The study circle facilitators training was developed by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL).

We will have **[*insert* number]** participants in the training. We will meet at **[*insert* location].** The dates and time of the training is:

[*insert* date and time]

This letter will tell you a bit more about what to expect from the training and from study circles, what type of support you will receive, and what to do before the training.

Expectations

As a study circle facilitator you will be asked to lead a group of adult education practitioners in a professional development process that involves reading, discussing, and considering the practical implications of recent research in adult education. Your role will be to facilitate learning, not to be an expert!

At the training you will be experiencing typical study circle activities, learning more about facilitation, and planning your study circle work.

Support for Participants

[*insert* information about stipends and expenses]

Before the training, please read the enclosed materials:

- Agenda and Objectives

- NCSALL

- NCSALL Study Circles

- Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS)

- The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)

Please bring the materials with you to the training. We will discuss the readings at the training.

If you have any questions about the study circle facilitator training in general or about what to do before the training, please call me at **[*insert* facilitator's telephone number]** or send me an e-mail at **[*insert* facilitator's e-mail address].**

Thanks for participating. I'm looking forward to a great training.

Sincerely,

[*insert* facilitator's name and title]

AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions

Objectives and Agenda

Attitudes on Research

What Is a Study Circle?

Examining Research Findings

Overview of Study Circle Guide

Challenges and Supports: A Force Field Analysis

Addressing Facilitation Challenges

Logistics and Next Steps

Evaluation

OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the connection between research and practice and how study circles support this connection

- Name the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice

- Facilitate typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges

- Utilize the NCSALL *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*

- Prepare, organize, and facilitate a study circle in your state, region, or program

NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

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 between 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, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner persistence, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) professional development, and (4) assessment.

NCSALL's 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 about NCSALL, to download free copies of our
publications, or to purchase bound copies, please visit our Web site at:

www.ncsall.net

NCSALL STUDY CIRCLES: THE BASICS

What is a NCSALL study circle?

A NCSALL study circle is a professional development activity for adult basic education, adult secondary education, or adult ESOL practitioners. The goal of a study circle is to bring practitioners together to read research articles presenting findings from adult education studies, discuss the relevance of the findings for the adult students with whom they work, discuss strategies for applying the findings in their classrooms and programs, and make plans for trying strategies or changing their practice.

Who participates?

Study circles are designed for teachers, administrators, tutors or other program staff. Ideally, 8 to 12 participants participate in the study circle group.

How long are the study circles?

Usually, a study circle is nine hours long, divided into three, three-hour sessions, spaced every other week for six weeks. The Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Study Circle is 10 ½ hours long, divided into three 3 ½-hour sessions.

Where can study circles happen?

Study circles can take place at a program with all participants who are staff of that program. Or, they can happen at a local or regional level, with teachers from different programs coming together. Or, they can happen as part of an intensive institute with teachers from all over participating.

How much do study circles cost to sponsor?

Study circle guides are free for downloading from NCSALL. The costs to sponsor include paying the facilitators for their time, including prep time and perhaps travel. We figure roughly 25 hours or $500, but that's just an estimate, for the facilitator's stipend plus photocopies for the participants.

Who facilitates the study circle?

Anyone can facilitate the study circle: a teacher within a program, a program administrator, or a professional developer. The study circle guides are designed to be all inclusive. The steps, handouts, readings, newsprint models, and even the advertising flyers are included in the guides.

What training does the facilitator need?

If the facilitator is a professional developer or a teacher with some experience facilitating training, we anticipate that they do not need much training, if any. We have designed the study circle guides to be self-explanatory and stand-alone; the guide even includes tips and strategies for facilitators about running a study circle. However, NCSALL does have this one-day "walk through" training-of-trainers that can be used to train a group of facilitators. This may be useful for teachers who have not had much experience with training or facilitation.

What do study circles produce?

We have an evaluation of the reading study circles underway now, but the results are not yet compiled. However, we believe that study circles meet the following purposes:

- Help teachers, administrators, and other staff learn about the research findings on a particular topic and assess its relevance to the students with whom they work.

- Help teachers, administrators, and other staff read, understand, judge, and plan to use research to improve their classroom or program practices.

- Help teachers, administrators, and other staff learn from each other and share strategies and ideas for changing practices.

How are study circles organized?

A program administrator or professional developer in a region or area decides to sponsor a study circle. He/she assesses the interest of teachers in that region in a particular topic (learner persistence, reading, contextualized instruction, multiple intelligences, accountability, adult development, or alternatives to class-based instruction). He/she finds a teacher or professional developer to facilitate the study circle and downloads the guide. Either the facilitator reviews and sets up the study circle on his/her own, or a group of facilitators are trained in how to conduct a study circle. Either the facilitator, the professional developer, or the program administrator recruits teachers to participate in the study circle. When a sufficient number of teachers are confirmed, the facilitator sends out the initial readings and handouts, plus information about the study circle, and the meetings occur. During the final meeting, the group of participants discusses and decides if they want to come back together again

Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS)

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

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

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

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

NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' (ABE) CLUSTERS

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

The mean word recognition score for these students was a 6.62 grade equivalent (GE). Their mean oral reading mastery level was GE 7.9, and their mean receptive vocabulary score was equivalent to a GE 6.5. On a test of background knowledge, the mean for the group was below

average range for the test, and the mean score on a word analysis test (Woodcock-Reading Mastery Word Attack) placed this group of students in the 26th percentile.

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

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

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

In general, many adult basic education students below the GED level have reading skills similar to those of children at risk for reading difficulty. Phonemic awareness problems that existed in childhood persisted into adulthood. Their reading comprehension and reading rate (fluency) seem to have stalled at middle school levels. Perhaps this is because, although they got extra help with reading in the primary grades from Chapter 1 or special education teachers, they got no such

help in middle or high school. Because their reading was stalled at middle school levels, their background knowledge and vocabulary also top off at that level.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The researchers used the data from four English tests and five Spanish tests to create clusters of similar learners. While the size of the sample used in this analysis means that these findings shouldn't be

generalized across all Spanish speakers, they can be suggestive. Key findings from this analysis and related implications include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The two clusters of Spanish speakers who have low levels of education in Spanish also have severe decoding problems and show other signs of reading disabilities.

Despite an average of almost ten years in the US and almost three years of ESOL instruction, unlike students in the other clusters, their English skills remain at early beginning levels.

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

The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)[1]

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

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

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

GOALS

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

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

Level 3 students. Level 3 is the IALS level associated with increased civic participation, increased economic success and independence, and enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and personal literacy.

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

THE SAMPLE

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

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

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

All participants were assessed in: 1) receptive (oral) vocabulary, 2) real-word reading for accuracy and speed, 3) pseudo-word reading for accuracy and speed, 4) spelling, 5) rapid naming of letters, and 6) short-term working memory. They also completed prose and document literacy tasks

from the IALS and a modified version of the IALS background questionnaire covering educational history, employment, reading habits, etc.

Receptive vocabulary	Shortened version of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test created by K. Yamamoto (PPVT-Y)[2]
Real-word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-A)[3]
Pseudo-word reading for accuracy and speed	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-B)[2]
Spelling	Adaptation of diagnostic spelling assessment published by Louisa Moats[4]
Short-term working memory	Forward and backward Digit Span subtests from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale IIIR[5]
Rapid naming of letters	Rapid Automatized Naming of Letters (RAN) and scrambled alphabet letters[6]

THE FINDINGS – PART 1

Proportions Correct by IALS Prose Proficiency

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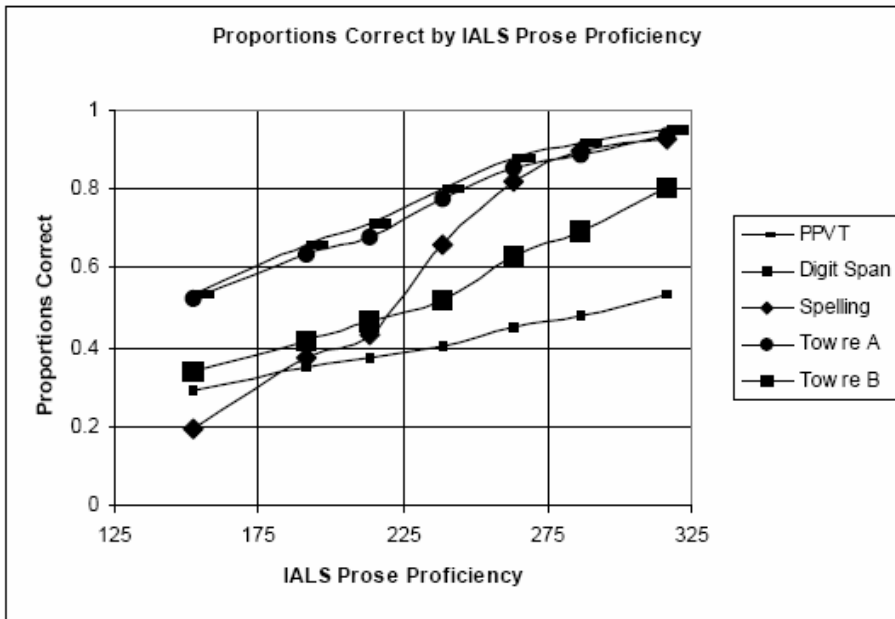
[2] Dunn, L. & Dunn, L. (1997). Peabody picture vocabulary test III (PPVT-III). Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

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

[4] Moats, L.C. (1995). Spelling development, disability, and instruction. Timonium, MD: York Press.

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

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

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

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

THE FINDINGS – PART 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMPLICATIONS

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

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Finding

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

Related Recommendation

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

Key Finding

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

Key Finding

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

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

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

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

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

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

Related Recommendation

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

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

Key Finding

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

STEPS FOR FACILITATING THE TRAINING

Objectives: By the end of the training participants will be able to…

- Explain the connection between research and practice and how study circles support this connection

- Name the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice

- Facilitate typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges

- Utilize the NCSALL *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*

- Prepare, organize, and facilitate a study circle in their states, regions, or programs

Time: 6 hours

Preparation:

⬜ NEWSPRINTS (Prepare ahead of time: <u>Underlined</u> in the steps)

___ Objectives

___ Agenda

___ Research provides useful information…

___ It is important for policy decisions…

___ Teachers should base their instructional…

___ Evidence-based Practice

___ Features of Effective Professional Development

___ Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies

___ Review of Contents

___ +Supports/-Challenges

___ Useful/How to Improve

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

___ Role Assignments [copy only enough for the number of small groups you will have; one strip per participant]

___ Observer's Checklist [one copy for each small group]

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

MATERIALS

___ *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (or other study circle guide) [one copy for each participant]

___ blank newsprint sheets

___ newsprint easel

___ markers, pens, tape

___ signs—agree, disagree, not sure

___ scarf, hat, or other object to signal when an activity is being facilitated

STEPS:

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (20 MINUTES)

- **Welcome participants** to the study circle facilitators 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 describe their experience with study circles. If participants are from a wide area, you may want to post a map, and ask participants to point out where they live.

> **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.

- **Introduce NCSALL and its Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research (CPPR) initiative** by reminding the participants that they received a page on NCSALL in their pre-meeting packet. Tell them that NCSALL has developed study circles as one way to connect practice and research. Invite them to visit the NCSALL Web site (www.ncsall.net) to find out more about the research NCSALL conducted and to look at the various teaching and training materials developed by NCSALL. They can also find the practitioner newsletter, *Focus on Basics,* on the Web site.

- **Make sure that participants know** where bathrooms are located, when the training will end, when the breaks and lunch will be, and any other "housekeeping" information.

2. OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA (10 MINUTES)

- 🗎 **Post the newsprints** <u>Objectives</u> and <u>Agenda</u> **and distribute the handout** *Agenda and Objectives*.

Objectives

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

- Explain the connection between research and practice and how study circles support this connection

- Name the key elements of NCSALL study circles—professional wisdom, research, and their application to practice

- Facilitate typical study circle activities—introductions, reading discussion, "live" Likert scale, brainstorming, jigsaw, force-field analysis, planning for next steps, and evaluation

- Name the supports and challenges of conducting study circles and identify ways to deal with the challenges

- Utilize the NCSALL *Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*

- Prepare, organize, and facilitate a study circle in your state, region, or program

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions (Done!)
2. Objectives and Agenda (Doing)
3. Attitudes on Research
4. What is a Study Circle?
5. Examining Research Findings
6. Overview of Study Circle Guide
7. Challenges and Supports: A Force Field Analysis
8. Addressing Facilitation Challenges
9. Logistics and Next Steps
10. Evaluation

- **Ask participants** to note the objectives. Explain that the training helps prepare them to facilitate NCSALL study circles. In the training they will take part in and discuss various activities typical of study circles, learn how the study circle guides support facilitators, and plan for facilitating study circles in their states, regions, or programs.

- **Review the Agenda.** Explain that the participants will begin the day by looking at connecting research and practice in education. Next they will learn about the specifics of facilitating NCSALL study circles and spend time on

facilitation techniques. Finally, they will plan for facilitating study circles in their states, regions, or programs.

- **Explain that the two steps** just completed are included in every study circle. These steps help create safety and show respect for the participants—helping to set a relaxed and open tone, as well as establishing the ground rules.

3. ATTITUDES ON 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 others.

- **Post the three signs,** Agree, Disagree, and Not Sure in different parts of the room.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Research provides useful information….</u>

> Research provides useful information to supplement the "trial and error" process many teachers use in their teaching.

- **Read the statement** on the newsprint and ask participants to move to the sign—agree, disagree, not sure—that best reflects their belief about the statement. They can stand between signs 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.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>It is important for policy decisions….</u>

> It is important for policy decisions to be based on practical information rather than theory.

- **Read the statement** on the newsprint and ask participants to move to the sign—agree, disagree, not sure—that best reflects their belief about the statement. They can stand between signs 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.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Teachers should base their instructional….</u>

> Teachers should base their instructional decisions
> on research.

- **Read the statement** on the newsprint and ask participants to move to the sign—agree, disagree, not sure—that best reflects their belief about the statement. They can stand between signs 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.

- **Reconvene the whole group. Ask participants** for their reaction to the activity, noting that they may have practitioners in their study circles that have a variety of beliefs about research. Their reactions to reading and discussing research may vary accordingly. Explain that the "live Likert scale" is a typical activity in the NCSALL study circles. Invite the participants to ask questions about how to facilitate the "live Likert scale" activity.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Evidence-based Practice</u>.

> **Evidence-based Practice**
>
> Evidence-based practice is the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction.

- **Explain to participants** that this definition comes from the director of the Institute for Educational Sciences and that NCSALL has adopted it. This definition values both empirical research and the professional wisdom of practitioners.

4. WHAT IS A STUDY CIRCLE? (20 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to look more closely at study circles. There are a variety of study circles, but the NCSALL study circles are designed for professional development in adult education.

- **Invite the participants** to take a few minutes to think silently about a professional development experience in which they took part and that they found particularly helpful.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Features of Effective Professional Development</u>. Ask the participants if these features were true of the professional development experiences about which they were thinking. Invite them to add to the list, writing their responses on the newsprint.

> **Features of Effective Professional Development**
>
> - It occurs over time.
> - It is applicable to current work.
> - It provides an opportunity to exchange ideas with other practitioners.
> -
> -
> -

- **Explain to participants** that the NCSALL study circles include many features of effective professional development. They are based on research and professional wisdom.

- ⬜ **Refer participants to the handout** *NCSALL Study Circles: The Basics* that was mailed to them in the Pre-

meeting Packet. Read the definition of a NCSALL study circle from the handout:

> *A NCSALL study circle is a professional development activity for adult basic education, adult secondary education, or adult ESOL practitioners. The goal of a study circle is to bring practitioners together to read research articles presenting findings from adult education studies, discuss the relevance of the findings for the adult students with whom they work, discuss strategies for instruction and programs, and make plans for trying strategies or changing their practices in applying the findings in their classrooms and programs.*

- **Explain to participants** that the NCSALL study circles are usually three sessions of three hours each for 8 to 12 participants. Participants prepare for each session by reading several articles. During the first session, participants reflect on their own experiences with the topic and share their professional wisdom, like what they did in the introductions and in generating the list of features of effective professional development. What the research has to say provides the content for the second session. The third session brings the professional wisdom and research together as practitioners determine how they might apply what they learned in the study circle to their practice.

- **Close this activity** by asking participants why this kind of activity—eliciting their own experiences—is used early in the study circles.

- **Distribute the** *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* (or other study circle guide participants will be using). Invite them to look at a similar activity in their guide. If you are using the *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*, direct participants to Activity 5, Types of Research on pp. 59-60 of the guide. Invite participants to ask the questions they might have about facilitating this type of activity.

5.   EXAMINING RESEARCH FINDINGS   (40 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that they will experience another activity that is typical of NCSALL study circles— discussion of the research findings assigned as a reading. This activity is from the study circle on research-based adult reading instruction.

- **Explain to participants** that the purpose of the activity is to discuss research about the specific reading profiles of adult learners and to look at one resource for developing profiles of adult learners with whom they work.

- **Refer participants to the two readings** that were mailed to them in the Pre-Meeting Packet: **Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS): NCSALL Research Brief** and **The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): NCSALL Research Brief.** Ask them to form small groups according to the categories of learners in the study:

  o   Teachers of adults with GED/pre-GED reading skills

  o   Teachers of adults with intermediate reading skills

  o   Teachers of adults with low-level/beginning reading skills

  o   Teachers of ESOL students

  Groups should have no fewer than three members, so you may need to negotiate the groups until they are formed.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies</u>. In their small groups, ask the participants to spend 20 minutes discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS studies, guided by the questions on the newsprint.

> **Note to Facilitator**
>
> If participants teach more than one type of learner, ask them to join the group that corresponds to the type of learner for whom they are most interested in improving reading instruction. If there is only one person in a particular group, ask her/him to join another person, pair, or group.

> **Discussing the ARCS and Component Skills/IALS Studies**
>
> • What questions do you have about the research findings from the ARCS study? From the Component Skills/IALS? (Try to answer your questions among your group.)
>
> • Do you agree with the implications presented in the study? Why or why not?
>
> • What might these implications mean for your teaching?

- **After 20 minutes, bring the small groups back together as a whole group.** Ask each small group to say a few sentences highlighting what was covered in their discussions.

- **Refer participants to Activity 2,** Assessing and Developing Reading Profiles of Adult Learners, on pp. 229-230 of the *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*, where the directions are for the activity that they just completed. Note the directions for the various elements of the activity. Invite participants to ask questions they might have about facilitating a similar activity.

Break (15 minutes)

6. OVERVIEW OF STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE   (75 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that the purpose of the activity is to review the contents of the study circle guide. Ask the participants to form six small groups. Assign one section of the study circle guide to each group:

    About Study Circles, pp. 1-16

    To Do Before Session One, pp. 19-50

    Steps for Facilitating Session One, pp. 51-168

    Steps for Facilitating Session Two, pp. 169-226

    Steps for Facilitating Session Three, pp. 227-246

    Tips for Facilitating a Study Circle, pp. 247-end

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Review of Contents</u>. Ask the small groups to take 10 minutes to prepare a three-minute

summary on their section, using the following questions as a guide.

> **Review of Contents**
>
> - What is in this section?
> - How might you use the section to prepare for the study circle?
> - What questions do you have?

- **Reconvene the whole group** and ask the small groups to briefly report on what they learned. Remind participants that each study circle guide has similar sections.

- **Invite the participants** to review Session Two in their guides. Note how the steps, time, and instructions are presented and how the symbols for newsprints, handouts, and so on are used.

- **Ask the participants** to re-form their small groups (or pairs). Assign by number, one activity or step from Session Two to each group. Ask the groups to take 10 minutes to read through the instructions, imagining that they are planning to facilitate that step. Ask groups to discuss their comfort with the instructions and to note any questions or problems.

- **Reconvene the whole group.** Invite the small groups to report on their discussions and questions. Attempt to answer questions and/or address confusing instructions.

Lunch (60 minutes)

7. CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS: A FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS
(15 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that, in the third session of a study circle, participants consider how they can use what they learned. One of the typical activities is a force field analysis. The purpose of this activity is for them to participate in a force field analysis by thinking about their roles as study circle facilitators.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>+Supports/-Challenges</u>.

+Supports	-Challenges
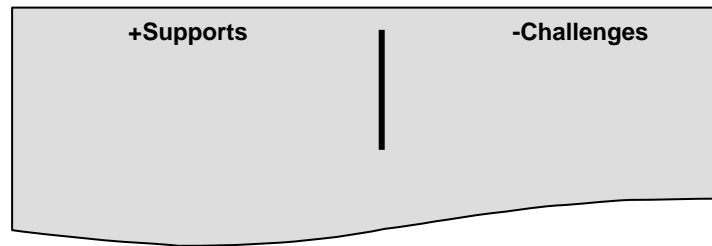
- **Ask the group to brainstorm** the challenges (factors that hinder) they face in facilitating study circles. These may be limited time, problem participants, and lack of support from program director. Write, exactly as said, each challenge mentioned on the right side of the newsprint. Take no more than five minutes to list challenges.

- **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 participants. Write these on the left side of the newsprint under the "plus" sign.

- **Lead a discussion** with the whole group about how the challenges could be reduced and how the supports could be increased.

- **Point out that the force field analysis activity** is used in the study circles in a variety of ways. Activity 5, Taking Next Steps: Supports and Constraints, on pp. 233-234 of the *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction*, is an example. Invite participants to ask questions about facilitating a force field analysis.

8. ADDRESSING FACILITATION CHALLENGES (60 MINUTES)

Note to Facilitator

Before the training, make copies of the handout *Role Assignments* so that you have one set of strips for each small group of five, and enough strips for each person. Make a copy of the handout *Observer's Checklist* for each group.

- **Explain to participants that the purpose** of this activity is to explore ways to address some of the challenges they listed in the previous activity. Note that while the study circle guides are quite specific, they cannot address all of the possible responses from participants. The participants will play various roles—facilitator, participant, and observer—in a short activity, then discuss their experiences.

- 🗋 **Randomly distribute one strip to each participant from the handout** *Role Assignments.* Ask the participants to silently read what is on their strip, not sharing the information.

  Ask the Process Observers to identify themselves and give them a copy of the handout *Observer's Checklist.*

  Then ask the participants to break into small groups according to the number on their strips, e.g. all the "3's" in the same group. Tell them that the group is to take 10 minutes to carry out the activities presented by the Facilitators. Remind the Process Observers to take notes.

- **Reconvene the whole group.** Invite the Facilitators to share how they felt during the activity. Then invite the participants to share. Lastly, invite the Process Observers to report on what they saw. Ask the participants what they learned from the experience.

- **Refer participants to the last section** of the study circle guide. The Tips for Facilitating Study Circles, pp. 247-263 in *NCSALL Study Circle Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction,* provides useful tips and suggestions.

Break (15 minutes)

9. LOGISTICS AND NEXT STEPS (30 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants that the** purpose of this activity is to address the logistics of sponsoring and facilitating study circles in their states, regions, and/or programs.

- **The facilitator or someone from the sponsoring organization addresses** the following areas:

  o Recruiting for study circles

  o Reporting requirements

  o Options for follow-up sessions (within programs and/or across programs)

    o   Logistics for setting up and facilitating study circles

    o   Documentation and evaluation (state requirements)

10. EVALUATION   (15 MINUTES)

- **Explain to participants** that, in the time left, you would like to get feedback from them about this training.

- **Post the newsprint** <u>Useful/How to Improve.</u>

Useful	How to Improve

  Ask the participants first to tell you what was useful or helpful to them about the design of the training. 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.

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating the Training

1. Welcome and Introductions	20 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Everyone introduces themselves.
- Housekeeping and logistics.

2. Objectives and Agenda	10 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post newsprints; pass out handout *Agenda and Objectives;* review.
- Debrief activity from facilitator's perspective.

3. Attitudes on Research	30 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post signs around the room and post newsprints; ask participants to move to sign that matches their beliefs about the statement.
- Ask a few participants to discuss why they chose their location.
- Post newsprint and review definition of evidence-based practice.

4. What Is a Study Circle?	20 mins., WHOLE GROUP

- Post newsprint; ask participants if these features are true for professional development; brainstorm other features.
- Review key points on handout *NCSALL Study Circles: The Basics*.
- Post newsprint and review definition of evidence-based practice.
- Debrief activity from facilitator's perspective, noting location in study circle guide.

5. Examining Research Findings	40 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP

- Refer to two readings: ARCS Research Brief and Component Skills/IALS Research Brief.
- Form small groups according to the type of students participants teach.
- Post the newsprint; spend 20 minutes in small groups discussing the research.
- Regroup; brief report on highlights from each small group.
- Debrief activity from facilitator's perspective, noting location in study circle guide.

15–Minute Break

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating the Training

6. Overview of Study Circle Guide	*75 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP, then SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP*

- Form six small groups; assign section of study circle guide to each group to review.
- Regroup; brief report on highlights from each smaller group.
- Reconvene small groups to read through an activity and note questions.
- Regroup and answer questions.

60–Minute Lunch

7. Supports and Challenges	*15 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Post newsprint; brainstorm challenges and then supports to facilitating study circles.
- Discuss how the supports might be increased and challenges reduced.
- Debrief activity from facilitator's perspective, noting location in study circle guide.

8. Addressing Facilitation Challenges	*60 mins., SMALL GROUPS, then WHOLE GROUP*

- Form small groups of five participants by distributing slips; distribute handout *Observer's Checklist* to Process Observers; identify Facilitators.
- Small groups conduct activity.
- Regroup and debrief—facilitators first, then participants, then observers.
- Note section in study circle guide that has tips for facilitators.

15–Minute Break

9. Logistics and Next Steps	*30 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Address logistics for setting up and conducting study circles; review documentation and reporting requirements.

10. Evaluation	*15 mins., WHOLE GROUP*

- Post newsprint Useful/How to Improve; solicit feedback.

Materials to Hand Out

Contents

Handouts

Handout ☐: *Role Assignments* (one strip per participant)

Handout ☐: *Observer's Checklist* (one per small group)

ROLE ASSIGNMENTS*

Group One

1. You are the Facilitator. Use your best facilitation skills to accomplish the two tasks cited. Encourage the group to *discuss* pros and cons under the second task, not just brainstorm a list.	Tell the group they will have 10 minutes to discuss the following tasks: (1) List the three groups and 10 clusters of reading skill levels. (5 minutes) (2) What steps could an instructor take to help intermediate students? (5 minutes)
1. You are the Process Observer.	Please ask the facilitators of *this* training to give you an "Observation Checklist."
1. You are the "distracter."	Do not overplay your role. Simply find ways to move the group off task.
1. You are the "shy participant."	You will not contribute anything unless asked specifically by the facilitator or other group member to contribute.
1. You are "neutral." (You have no assigned role.)	Just be yourself and interact as you normally would.

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*Mary Ann Corley, California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, designed this activity for its study circle facilitator training.

ROLE ASSIGNMENTS

Group Two

2. You are the Facilitator. Use your best facilitation skills to accomplish the two tasks cited. Encourage the group to *discuss* pros and cons under the second task, not just brainstorm a list.	Tell the group they will have 10 minutes to discuss the following tasks: (1) List the three groups and 10 clusters of reading skill levels. (5 minutes) (2) What steps could an instructor take to help intermediate students? (5 minutes)
2. You are the Process Observer.	Please ask the facilitators of *this training* to give you an "Observation Checklist."
2. You are the "yeah, but" person.	Try to think of reasons why it might not succeed.
2. You are the "supporter."	You want the facilitator to succeed and tend to support whatever is asked. You may even challenge those who are creating a problem for the facilitator.
2. You are "neutral." (You have no assigned role.)	Just be yourself and interact as you normally would.

ROLE ASSIGNMENTS

Group Three

3. You are the Facilitator. Use your best facilitation skills to accomplish the two tasks cited. Encourage the group to *discuss* pros and cons under the second task, not just brainstorm a list.	Tell the group they will have 10 minutes to discuss the following tasks: (1) List the three groups and 10 clusters of reading skill levels. (5 minutes) (2) What steps could an instructor take to help intermediate students? (5 minutes)
3. You are the Process Observer.	Please ask the facilitators of *this training* to give you an "Observation Checklist."
3. You are the "talkative person."	You attempt to dominate the group. But don't overplay your role. Simply find something to talk about that is related to the tasks at hand.
3. You are the "disagreer."	You tend to be on the opposite side of whatever is suggested and have reasons for your disagreement. But don't overplay your role and become a caricature.
3. You are "neutral." (You have no assigned role.)	Just be yourself and interact as you normally would.

ROLE ASSIGNMENTS

Group Four

4. You are the Facilitator. Use your best facilitation skills to accomplish the two tasks cited. Encourage the group to *discuss* pros and cons under the second task, not just brainstorm a list.	Tell the group they will have 10 minutes to discuss the following tasks: (1) List the three groups and 10 clusters of reading skill levels. (5 minutes) (2) What steps could an instructor take to help intermediate students? (5 minutes)
4. You are the Process Observer.	Please ask the facilitators of *this training* to give you an "Observation Checklist."
4. You are the "challenger."	You openly challenge the task assigned indicating that you don't believe instructors can do anything if a student is about to drop out. Don't overplay your role, however. Choose your challenges.
4. You are the "supporter."	You want the facilitator to succeed and tend to support whatever is asked. You may even challenge those who are creating a problem for the facilitator
4. You are "neutral." (You have no assigned role.)	Just be yourself and interact as you normally would.

ROLE ASSIGNMENTS

Group Five

5. You are the Facilitator. Use your best facilitation skills to accomplish the two tasks cited. Encourage the group to *discuss* pros and cons under the second task, not just brainstorm a list.	Tell the group they will have 10 minutes to discuss the following tasks: (1) List the three groups and 10 clusters of reading skill levels. (5 minutes) (2) What steps could an instructor take to help intermediate students? (5 minutes)
5. You are the Process Observer.	Please ask the facilitators of *this training* to give you an "Observation Checklist."
5. You are the "distracter."	Do not overplay your role. Simply find ways to move the group off-task.
5. You are the "blocker."	You tend to insist on getting your own way; unwilling to compromise.
5. You are "neutral." (You have no assigned role.)	Just be yourself and interact as you normally would.

Handout ⬭

OBSERVER'S CHECKLIST

The Facilitator:	Comments:
Fed back/reflected content while remaining neutral and responded appropriately to participant concerns	
Clarified ideas that seemed not clearly understood	
Summarized progress	
Brought in shy or non-participating members	
Allowed for silence (reflection by participants)	
Used non-verbal contacts: eye contact, body language of agreement, etc.	

The Participants:	Comments:
Participated somewhat equally	
Some tended to dominate	
Some were distracters: keeping the group off-task	
Some appeared to challenge the facilitator or the group's ideas	
Some tended to create tension and hostility	

NCSALL FEEDBACK FORM FOR TRAINING FACILITATORS[7]

1. Name of study circle facilitators training conducted: _____

2. Location/site of your study circle facilitators training: _____

3. When did your training meet?   Day: _____   Time: _____

4. How many times did your study circle facilitators training meet? _____

5. Generally speaking, how satisfied have you been with your experience as a study circle facilitators training facilitator?

   ☐ Very satisfied   ☐ Somewhat satisfied   ☐ Not at all satisfied

   Why?

6. What was your most satisfying experience as a facilitator of the study circle facilitators training? Please provide an example:

7. What was your most frustrating experience as a facilitator of the study circle facilitators training? Please provide an example.

8. In all, how many people participated in your study circle facilitators training? _____

9. How satisfied were your participants with the study circle facilitators training process?
   ☐ Most participants seemed satisfied
   ☐ Most participants expressed dissatisfaction
   ☐ Most participants expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction at various points in the process
   ☐ I couldn't judge their levels of satisfaction
   Please explain:

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[7]Adapted from Study Circles Resource Center Feedback Form.

10. **Did you have adequate support from the program organizers?**

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Not sure

    Please explain:

11. **What additional support would have been helpful?**

12. **If you were to facilitate another study circle facilitators training, what factors would you change (for example, discussion materials, activities, etc.)?**

13. **What difference has taking part in this study circle facilitators training program made in you personally?**

14. **Other impressions, concerns, and comments:**

Your name: (optional)_____

Return to:

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44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1211
Attn: Cristine Smith

NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

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 between 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, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner persistence, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) professional development, and (4) assessment.

NCSALL's 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 about NCSALL, to download free copies of our publications, or to purchase bound copies, please visit our Web site at:

www.ncsall.net