

INTRODUCTION

The *Adult Beginning Reader Guide: Activities & Resources Level 0.0-3.9* is made possible through a Florida Department of Education State Leadership Grant. This guide is a revised version of the *Curriculum for the Adult Beginning Reader Level 0-3* which was developed through a 353 Grant funded through the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Adult and Community Education in 1993-94.

This information is a guide for teachers and volunteers who work with adult beginning readers at levels 0.0-3.9. The goal of this guide is to empower the student to progress toward functional literacy in order to read and write in ways meaningful to his life.

APPROACH

The instructional methodology for this program is an eclectic, meaning-based approach that emphasizes whole language. Decoding and word recognition strategies are the back-up tools helpful in mastering unfamiliar words.

The approach for this guide is individualized and learner-centered, building on the student's experiences, background, and knowledge. The adult is a partner who actively participates in her learning.

The purpose of reading is always comprehension, so any beginning reader must first make the connection that reading is for meaning. One of the teacher's tasks is to guide the student into making the connection between reading, speaking, listening, and writing; however, reading should be done in meaningful context and should meet the student's needs.

USING THESE ACTIVITIES & ADAPTATION

These activities are predominately individualized. Simple adaptations will make them appropriate for group settings. The activities that are for small groups can be adapted for use with only the teacher or volunteer and student.

BENCHMARKS

The activities in this guide have been correlated to the Florida Adult Basic Education Curriculum Frameworks for Reading Levels 0.0 – 1.9 and 2.0 – 3.9.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the gathering of data to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the student. Means of assessment include formal testing, observation, interviews, and checklists. For many beginning readers informal assessment yields much useful information.

The simplest way to establish the student's overall goal is to ask , "Why did you enroll in this program? What do you want to do when you have finished?"

Another way to define the student's needs is by getting to know something about the student: background, school history, the community in which she lives and her family. The teacher can use part of the first class to interview the student in a friendly, nonjudgmental manner to establish rapport and provide information for working with her.

See the *Resources* section for additional information on testing.

RESOURCES

The *Resources* section of this guide contains information about working with low level literacy adults, learning disabilities, learning styles, instructional accommodations and testing. Included is a list of companies with addresses, telephone numbers and websites where materials for the beginning reader can be purchased.

PEOPLE LEARN DIFFERENTLY - METHODOLOGY

A beginning reader must develop the ability to recognize meaning in lines of print. The goal is for the reader to become unconcerned with the particular mechanics of reading and instead to focus on grasping the ideas conveyed by a group of words. A contextual approach to reading, such as **whole language**, is considered a top-down method. One reads to get meaning and for communication.

Reading is also the ability to decode, or break down, written words and to recognize words by **sight**. This approach is considered a bottom-up method. The theory is that people can learn to read by decoding or breaking down, unfamiliar words through the use of **phonics** and **structural analysis**. Another method is the “look-say”, or sight word (**vocabulary development**) approach, in which the student memorizes words.

Vocabulary Development

In order to read fluently, the reader must recognize certain sight words instantly. Some words have to be taught by sight because they do not have regular spelling patterns, and/or they are important words that must often be recognized in isolation. However, sight words can also be taught in the context of reading. Examples of sight words are sign words and number words.

Phonic Analysis

Phonics teaching is based on the alphabetic principle in the English language that letters and sounds are associated. In practice, the student identifies words by their sounds. Although the sound-symbol relationship, between the sound and a letter of the alphabet, is sometimes one-to-one, this is not always the case. For example, the letter *c* can have either a *k* sound or an *s* sound.

Since written symbols are codes for spoken language, phonics helps the reader decode, or master, the coding system. Phonics is not a method but a skill used to read unfamiliar words. The student must be able to discern one sound from another. In addition, she must develop associations between sounds and their written symbols and spelling patterns.

Because beginning adult readers often have poor auditory discrimination, phonics is very important. Yet, if phonic skills are taught in isolation, adults are often bored because they cannot see the relevance to meaning. This curriculum’s approach is that phonic skill development is a useful strategy that should be introduced in meaningful context. One approach is for the teacher to use the student’s language experience stories as a base for phonic skill development, combining meaning with skill building. Students need not learn the names of phonic patterns (such as consonant digraphs) or memorize generalizations.

Structural Analysis

Structural analysis, like phonics, is a decoding strategy. It is based on the principle of chunking, or breaking words down into chunks rather than single letters and sounds.