The purpose of this document is to help programs to integrate Evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) into English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. It provides an overview of the four reading components, evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI), and instructional priorities for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level adult readers.

As required by WIOA, ABE curriculum and instruction must provide explicit and systematic instruction[[1]](#endnote-1) in the essential components of reading to adult learners at all levels, GLE 0-12. See [WIOA document brief](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/essential-components-reading.pdf) for more information about this requirement. While providing reading instruction to adult learners is not new, what is new is that the reading instruction practices that were taught in the STAR Reading Program are now required to also be used by teachers of beginner (GLE 0-3) and advanced (GLE 9-12) level students. This document explains how those practices may be adapted to use with students at the beginner and advanced levels.

**The four essential components of reading are research-based, and include:[[2]](#endnote-2)**

* **Alphabetics**,including phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding, is the process readers use to identify words. Readers must rely on alphabetic knowledge and decoding skills to read unfamiliar words.
* **Fluency** is the ability to read accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with prosody. Without fluency, readers attend more to decoding than to understanding the meaning of what they are reading. When word and sentence reading are automatic and fluent, readers can concentrate more fully on understanding and connecting sentences and paragraphs, enabling them to create meaning from the text. Reading fluency includes oral reading skills.
* **Vocabulary** is the body of words whose meanings a person knows and understands. Vocabulary knowledge—specifically, the depth, breadth, and flexibility of a person’s knowledge about words—is a primary predictor of reading success.
* **Reading comprehension** is the process and product of understanding text, and requires a high level of metacognitive engagement with text.

**Evidence-based Reading Instruction (EBRI) and the Four Components of Reading**

Research has identified that these four components are critical in the reading process and how reading develops. EBRI is a set of practices for teaching the four components that are proven to increase the reading achievement of adult learners. ACLS recommends that programs use the following EBRI best practices when teaching the essential components of reading:

* Use of diagnostic reading assessments to determine and prioritize individual learner’s areas of strengths and needs in the four components[[3]](#endnote-3)
* Provision of direct and explicit instruction, using the most relevant EBRI techniques suited to the specific levels of instruction for beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students
* Instruction and materials that are engaging and relevant to learners’ needs
* Instruction that is formatively assessed—continuously monitored by teacher and learners to gauge its effectiveness[[4]](#endnote-4)
* See <https://www.sabes.org/ebri> and <https://www.sabes.org/content/point-wioa-ebri-star>

For teachers of intermediate level (GLE 4-8) students, these EBRI techniques are taught through the STAR training, available free through SABES. STAR was specifically developed for program directors and teachers of students at this level. Programs opting to use the STAR instruction model must participate in the STAR training and are required to complete the training components.

See the next page for information on instruction for adult learners at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels (GLE 0-12).

Based on EBRI research, this chart represents at-a-glance the reading component areas on which to focus within each ABE level of instruction.

* Each level shows in color the reading components that are instructional priorities.
* The gray areas indicate reading components that are not recommended for teaching at that level.
* The half-gray areas indicate reading components that are less of a priority than the fully-colored component areas and should receive a smaller amount of instructional time.

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|  | **Alphabetics** | **Fluency** | **Vocabulary** | **Comprehension** |
| **Beginner**  **(GLE 0-3)** |  |  |  |  |
|  |
| **Intermediate[[5]](#footnote-1)**  **(GLE 4-8)** | Instruction in two to three of the four components to be based on individual diagnostic assessment of students. | | | |
| **Advanced**  **(GLE 9-12)** |  |  |  |  |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Use diagnostic assessment?** | **Teach EBRI Techniques for Alphabetics?** | **Teach EBRI Techniques for Fluency?** | **Teach EBRI Techniques for Vocabulary?** | **Teach EBRI Techniques for Comprehension?** | **Options** | **Training recommended for teachers and directors** |
| **Beginner**  **(GLE 0-3)** | Recommended, to assess in alphabetics and fluency areas to determine beginner learners’ needs and level of instruction. | *A priority area for instruction*. Recommend administering alphabetics assessment to determine need; teach letter-sound correspondences in order, skipping ones student knows. Use EBRI alphabetics techniques.[[6]](#endnote-5) | *A priority area for instruction*.  Based on recommended diagnostic assessment, group learners into similar reading levels for EBRI fluency instruction. Select EBRI techniques that offer more support. | Based on recommended diagnostic assessment, group learners into similar reading levels for EBRI vocabulary instruction for learning Tier 1 and Tier 2 words.[[7]](#endnote-6) Use EBRI vocabulary techniques. | Not a priority at this level. | Teachers certified in a reading instructional approach (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Wilson)may teach students using that method. Fill in with EBRI techniques as needed for any components not covered in the intervention program. | **First** take **overview of EBRI** (online) [**https://www.sabes.org/event/15351**](https://www.sabes.org/event/15351)  **Then** take **Diagnostic Assessments of Reading** training (online) [**https://www.sabes.org/event/13011**](https://www.sabes.org/event/13011)  **Then** take the **Alphabetics** PD training [**https://www.sabes.org/event/15356**](https://www.sabes.org/event/15356) (online) and the **Fluency** PD training [**https://www.sabes.org/event/13741**](https://www.sabes.org/event/13741)(online) |
| **Intermediate (GLE 4-8)** | Programs opting to use the STAR Model are required to assess all four components to determine intermediate learners’ needs and prioritize instruction in most needed reading components. | Based on word identification diagnostic assessment, group learners into similar reading levels for EBRI alphabetics instruction.  For students scoring below grade 4 on diagnostic assessment, administer phonics test and provide targeted phonics instruction as needed. | Based on diagnostic assessment, group learners into similar reading levels for EBRI fluency instruction. | Based on diagnostic assessment, group learners into similar reading levels for teaching EBRI Tier 2 vocabulary instruction.vi | Based on needs determined by diagnostic assessment, may not be a priority. If it is, group learners into similar reading levels for EBRI comprehension instruction. | Teachers certified in a reading instructional approach (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Wilson)should not use that program except with students scoring below grade 4 in an alphabetics diagnostic test. | Programs opting to use the STAR Model are required to participate in **STAR professional development training** to learn EBRI diagnostic assessment, alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension techniques. See [**https://www.sabes.org/star**](https://www.sabes.org/star)  Contact the **SABES ELA Curriculum and Instruction PD Center** for more information or to register at[**https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela**](https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela) |
| **Advanced (GLE 9-12)** | Recommended, to assess in vocabulary and comprehension areas to determine advanced learners’ needs and level of instruction. | Not a priority at this level. | Not a priority, though a few strategies will be discussed in SABES training. | *A priority area for instruction*. Explicit EBRI instruction in additional Tier 2vi and some Tier 3 vocabulary, according to students’ college and career readiness goals. | *A priority area for instruction*. Text complexity and building background knowledge are priorities. Read from more complex texts on a variety of topics and use EBRI comprehension techniques. | Use of a reading instructional approach (e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Wilson)is not recommended to be used with students at the advanced level. | **First** take **overview of EBRI** (online) [**https://www.sabes.org/event/15351**](https://www.sabes.org/event/15351)  **Then** take **Diagnostic Assessments of Reading** training (online) [**https://www.sabes.org/event/13011**](https://www.sabes.org/event/13011)  **Then** take **Components of Reading for Teachers of Adult Learners at GLE 9-12: Teaching Advanced Readers** (Face-to-Face with online follow-up): [**https://www.sabes.org/event/13246**](https://www.sabes.org/event/13246) |

ENDNOTES

1. Explicit instruction has distinct and important components: explanation, modeling, guided practice, and application, which includes monitoring progress. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Explanations drawn from National Research Council. (2012). *Improving Adult Literacy: Developing Reading and Writing*. A.M. Lesgold and M. Welch-Ross, Eds. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Available at <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13468&page=3>.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. **Diagnostic assessment**: Recommended, in order to determine learners’ needs and to prioritize instruction on the reading components most needed. Use placement tools to make rough student groupings into GLE 0-3, GLE 4-8, or GLE 9-12. ACLS recommends diagnostic assessment occur before instruction begins.

   Verify level once placed in class; depending on the student level and instructional priorities, administer diagnostic assessment for priority reading components. Based on diagnostic results, make decisions about how to meet the students’ instructional needs. Contact the SABES PD Center for ELA for information about training and free recommended diagnostic assessments. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. **Evidence-based reading instruction follows a specific process:**

   1. Administer placement and MAPT-CCR for Reading (or TABE 11/12 Reading for ABECI) to confirm beginner, intermediate, or advanced level class placement
   2. Administer a diagnostic assessment to determine students’ areas of strengths and needs in the four components
   3. Use diagnostic assessment results to create a student profile of needs within the four components; determine priority areas of instruction
   4. Based on students’ priority areas of instruction, group students of similar reading grade levels for instruction in one or more component areas of reading
   5. Develop daily class instructional routine (e.g., time spent on instruction of students grouped according to reading components and levels). Ensure instruction is prioritizing the most important components for students to work on so students are able to progress as quickly as possible
   6. Within the routine, teach EBRI techniques through direct and explicit instruction
   7. Monitor progress through formative assessment

   [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. **Important Note: At the intermediate level, not all reading components are recommended to be priorities for instruction. Learners at this level will have different priorities, so it is critical to administer a diagnostic assessment before instruction to determine which of the four components are the most important for individual learners. Learners with similar priority areas and grade level may then be grouped together for instruction**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
6. Alphabetics: Reading Horizons may be a helpful supplement to alphabetics instruction. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
7. **Tier 1, 2, and 3 Vocabulary**: Tier 1 words are those heard in everyday spoken language (e.g., *ask*, *baby*, *walk*, *smile*). Tier 2 or academic words are sophisticated words used across a range of texts to define common concepts. They are also used in a variety of academic disciplines, including math, science, social studies, and literature. Examples of Tier 2 words are *unique*, *alternate*, *influence*, and *minimum*. Tier 3 words capture important concepts within a specific discipline (*photosynthesis* in biology; *exponent* in math, *simile* in literature).

   **For more information** about the importance of Tier 2 or academic words, see Beck et al., (2013) *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

   Note: If teachers in a program use a text series for vocabulary, consider assigning a low level text with Tier 2 words for the beginners and higher for the next two levels so students learn a variety of Tier 2 words as they pass through the three levels of reading classes.

   **For more information**, contact Merilee Freeman, Director, SABES English Language Arts Curriculum and Instruction PD Center and STAR Program Coordinator, at [mfreeman@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:mfreeman@qcc.mass.edu), or Dana Varzan-Parker, ACLS Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Specialist who oversees STAR at ACLS, at [dvarzan-parker@doe.mass.edu](mailto:dvarzan-parker@doe.mass.edu). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)