Massachusetts
Adult Education in Community Adult Learning Centers and
Correctional Institutions

FY2018 and 2019
Handbook for
Student Achievement in Reading
(STAR) Implementation

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION
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The STAR Vision

The STAR (STudent Achievement in Reading)* vision is to establish structures and practices at the classroom, program, and state levels to support evidence-based reading instruction that result in increased learner outcomes.

STAR structures and practices include:

- Providing evidence-based reading instruction for intermediate level learners;
- Conducting diagnostic assessments;
- Grouping students according to instructional needs and organizing an instructional reading routine; and
- Planning and delivering instruction in **fluency**, **alphabets**, **vocabulary**, and **comprehension** that is:
  - Responsive to student needs identified through diagnostic assessment;
  - Delivered through explicit instruction;
  - Based on evidence-based instructional practices; and
  - Monitored and adjusted as students’ needs change.

* This vision statement was developed by national STAR.
Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to guide Massachusetts ABE programs in implementing STAR’s evidence-based reading instruction in their intermediate grade level equivalent (GLE 4-8) level classes. **Note:** If you wish to print a copy of the handbook, be sure to print the additional content made available through the use of hyperlinks throughout the document.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that “the essential components of reading” be incorporated into instruction. STAR is a nationally-developed professional development reform initiative focused on building the reading skills of intermediate level adult learners (i.e., grade level equivalent or GLE 4 to 8) in the essential components of reading instruction: **alphabetics**, **fluency**, **vocabulary**, and **comprehension**. At the national level, student outcome data shows that pre-Adult Secondary Education (ASE) students make measurable gains in reading achievement when teachers implement STAR’s structures and practices.

The Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) of the U.S. Department of Education supports and promotes the STAR initiative because its instructional practices are grounded in peer review research. Since OCTAE began the STAR initiative over a decade ago, 21 states have adopted this evidence-based reading instruction approach. Massachusetts began training programs in 2010 and a total of 73 ESE-funded programs have participated in the STAR trainings.

Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) offers training in STAR for directors (or coordinators) and pre-ASE teachers in Community Adult Learning Centers and Correctional Institutions. As part of their training, participants, attend STAR support meetings and webinars (as scheduled) and receive technical assistance from national STAR-certified trainers. **STAR participants must commit to the:**

- full participation of at least one pre-ASE teacher and the program director/coordinator in all aspects of the STAR training;
- administration of diagnostic reading assessments to determine and prioritize individual learner’s areas of strengths and needs in **alphabetics**, **fluency**, **vocabulary**, and **comprehension**;
- adjustment of program design to meet STAR requirements (e.g., some form of managed enrollment, class intensity);
- implementation of direct and explicit instruction, using the most relevant evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) techniques suited to intermediate level readers;
- use of instruction and materials that are engaging and relevant to learners’ needs;
- provision of instruction that is formatively assessed—continuously monitored by teachers and learners to gauge its effectiveness;
- participation of STAR teachers in observations by STAR TA providers (either in person or via video), and implementation of trainer feedback; and
- Classroom observation by program director of STAR teacher at least twice per year.
For a more extensive overview of STAR, see the Student Achievement in Reading STAR Toolkit, funded by OCTAE.

**Evidence-Based Reading Instruction and the College and Career Readiness Standards**

Evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) refers to instructional practices that have been proven by systematic, objective, valid, and peer-reviewed research to lead to predictable gains in reading achievement. As stated in the STAR Toolkit:

“With EBRI, teachers use diagnostic assessment procedures to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of each learner and target reading instruction accordingly. Teachers who use EBRI help learners improve their skills in each of the four components of reading—alphabetics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—by explaining new concepts, modeling strategies, and providing feedback when learners practice.”

Although STAR and EBRI pre-date the **College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE)**, they support each other well. The national STAR initiative illustrates this connection by having readers “picture a road winding into the distance. At the end of the road are the CCRSAE, the destination or goal that students are trying to reach. At the beginning of the road is a diagnostic assessment, the starting point for the students, where they are now. A car travelling along the road is labeled EBRI showing that evidence-based reading instruction is the vehicle that moves students from where they are to reaching the standards.”

“But how does STAR address Reading Anchor 10 (Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently) of the CCRSAE? Anchor 10 challenges students to read increasingly complex texts. Evidence-based reading instruction begins with diagnostic assessment to identify instructional levels, the level beyond mastery, where the text will be challenging (but not too frustrating) for the student. Once the student applies newly learned reading strategies to successfully read text at their instructional level, we move them up to practice using the strategy with text at a higher level. Diagnostic assessment and continuous monitoring allow STAR implementers to select texts that are challenging and complex for each student.”

**Contact Information**

Please contact the following staff with questions or concerns:

**Massachusetts STAR Coordinator:** Merilee Freeman mfreeman@qcc.mass.edu (508-854-4296)

**Massachusetts STAR Trainers:**

- Merilee Freeman mfreeman@qcc.mass.edu (508-854-4296)
- Jillian Moriarty moriartyjillian@gmail.com (508-963-1830)
- Evonne Peters evonnepeters@comcast.net (781-696-1016)
- Joan Schottenfeld jfshatz@gmail.com (339-206-1766)

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1 ST A R Tips and Techniques, July 2016, vol. 7. For more about the use of research and evidence-based practices as an indicator of quality, see Indicator Four and Standard 4.2 in the Indicators of Program Quality, June 2017 document.
ACLS STAR Contact:
- Jane Schwerdtfeger, Lead, janes@doe.mass.edu (781-338-3855)

Student Assessment
Three discrete assessment processes are used in STAR classrooms:

- **Initial Placement:** For placing incoming students into the intermediate level, pre-ASE STAR class (GLE 4-8).

- **Diagnostic Assessment:** For assessing the reading profile of each student assigned to the STAR class, to determine a learner’s profile of strengths and needs in order to provide targeted instruction.

- **Pre- and Post-testing for Educational Functioning Level Gains:** For determining the Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gains of STAR students.

Assessment for Initial Placement
ABE programs administer placement tests to students in order to determine their appropriate class level. Students who score in the GLE 4-8 or pre-ASE level are candidates for a STAR class. Programs may use any placement tests they choose, except the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) or the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT). If a student was in an ABE class the previous year, his/her pre- and post-test assessment scores may also be used for placement purposes.

Because STAR is designed specifically for intermediate readers (GLE 4-8), accurate placement is a critical first step in determining STAR eligibility. Students who score below GLE 4 or above GLE 8.9 in all areas of the reading diagnostic assessment should be placed in beginning or advanced classes, respectively. Attempting to provide instruction to these students compromises the delivery and outcomes of evidence-based reading instruction within the intermediate level STAR class.

If a student is placed in an intermediate level reading class but is determined to be below or above GLE 4-8 based on the results of the diagnostic reading assessment, s/he should not be enrolled and reported as a STAR student. While accuracy in data reporting is always important, the stakes are higher for STAR because state-level outcome data will be reviewed by researchers and key stakeholders at the state and national levels.

Diagnostic Assessment
Once initial placement is completed, programs administer a diagnostic assessment of reading for each pre-ASE student in the essential components of reading instruction: alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The goal is to determine learners’ specific strengths and needs in reading so that teachers can: (1) create a learner profile for each student, (2) select appropriate materials and evidence-based reading strategies, (3) group students by similar profiles, and (4) design appropriate instruction.

During STAR training, programs will learn how to administer diagnostic assessments. Programs must use diagnostic assessments of the essential components of reading, either the Diagnostic Assessments of

2 For more on the teaching the essential components of reading as required in WIOA, see this WIOA Brief.
Reading (DAR) Interpretive Profile, 2nd edition, or other diagnostic assessments (some free) recommended on the LINCS Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web page and LINCS diagnostic test resources.

Beginning a Diagnostic Reading Assessment
Test administrators need to roughly estimate the grade level at which to begin a learner’s diagnostic reading assessment. The MAPT scale scores (or, for Corrections, the TABE 9/10) may be used (along with other information such as class placement information, other class work or formative assessments), to help make that determination, if available. Once a starting level is determined, the test administrator may easily adjust the difficulty of the diagnostic assessment to pinpoint the learner’s reading strengths and needs. The initial grade level of the diagnostic assessment is meant to be a rough guide and does not have to be extremely precise. Test administrators will learn much more about the administration process during the STAR training.

Converting MAPT Scale Scores to Grade Level Equivalents (GLEs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NRS Levels</th>
<th>GLE Ranges</th>
<th>MAPT Scale Scores</th>
<th>TABE 9/10 Reading Scale Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Literacy</td>
<td>0-1.9</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>367 and below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Basic</td>
<td>2-3.9</td>
<td>200-299</td>
<td>368-460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Intermediate</td>
<td>4-5.9</td>
<td>300-399</td>
<td>461-517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Intermediate</td>
<td>6-8.9</td>
<td>400-499</td>
<td>518-566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Adult Secondary Education</td>
<td>9-10.9</td>
<td>500-599</td>
<td>567-595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Adult Secondary Education</td>
<td>11-12.9</td>
<td>600-700</td>
<td>596 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refer to the chart above. Suppose a learner has a MAPT scale score of 349, placing her within the Low Intermediate range on the MAPT from 300 to 399 and a GLE range from 4 to 5.9. Her diagnostic assessment should start at approximately grade 5.

Another learner has a MAPT scale score of 425, placing him in the High Intermediate range, 400-499, corresponding to a GLE range from 6-8.9. His diagnostic assessment should start at either grade 6 or 7.

Since we are making estimations, it does not make sense (and is not recommended) to determine scores down to the tenth of a GLE. A general estimate is good enough for this purpose.

Why do we need to know Grade Level Equivalents (GLEs)?
It is often necessary to be able to translate MAPT Scale Scores in Reading into Grade Level Equivalents (GLEs) for two reasons. First, many diagnostic assessments provide results in GLEs, including the DAR and the diagnostic assessments (some free) available on the LINCS Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web page and LINCS diagnostic test resources. To build a learner’s reading profile out of the essential components of reading (alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), all of the assessments - including Comprehension - need to be expressed in the same format, i.e., GLEs.
A second reason for translating MAPT scores into GLEs concerns instruction. Teachers need to know the difficulty level (readability) of reading materials in order to make sure the materials they plan to use are at the right level of challenge for their learners – not too easy, not too difficult. Some materials come with their readability level already calculated by the publisher, and this level is usually expressed in
GLEs. For materials whose readability is not known, teachers should not guess about their difficulty. Instead teachers are expected calculate a text’s readability using readability formulas – most of which express readability in GLEs. Free readability calculators are available online.

Test administrators may also use estimates of reading levels derived from MAPT scores (or in the case of Corrections, TABE 9/10 scores) to determine a learner’s instructional level for reading comprehension. This may be used instead of the DAR Silent Reading Comprehension test. Test administrators may use the directions for “Converting MAPT Scale Scores to Grade Level Equivalents (GLEs)” on page 7 to roughly estimate each student’s reading comprehension level for instruction. The Comprehension Interview/Student Questionnaire is still required.

**Administering the DAR**
See Appendix B for an overview of DAR administration.

**The DAR must be administered by teachers, directors, or volunteers who have participated in the STAR Institutes or SABES professional development on administering EBRI diagnostic assessments.**

The benefits of teachers administering the diagnostic assessments of reading in all four areas to students include providing opportunities to:

- establish an initial rapport with students;
- learn about students’ reading preferences (i.e., high interest genres and topics); and
- design and differentiate instruction in light of observations made during the assessments.

While SABES-trained program directors or volunteers may assist with diagnostic assessment, the STAR teacher must administer the Comprehension Interview in Appendix C as it yields important information for guiding instruction.

Teachers then complete student groupings before instruction begins because the daily routine and instruction for the STAR class is based on the assessment results.

Programs must administer and score diagnostic assessments of reading as instructed in the STAR training. **DAR or any other diagnostic assessment data must be maintained in student files for the duration of the grant.**

**Ordering DAR Materials**
The DAR is available through Riverside Publishers. To order, contact the Massachusetts sales representative, Lauren DeFrancesco at (317) 364-8432, or lauren.defrancesco@hmhco.com. Find order forms at [http://www.riversidepublishing.com/products/dar/pricing.html](http://www.riversidepublishing.com/products/dar/pricing.html).

**Recording DAR Information in SMARTT**
STAR programs are no longer required to enter DAR data for students enrolled in STAR classes. **NOTE:** Diagnostic assessments of reading are administered only once for initial group placement. They are not to be used as formative or summative assessments to determine gains in reading comprehension or in any of the other essential reading components.
Pre- and Post-Testing for Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Gains

Per ACLS assessment policy, programs must pre- and post-test enrolled students each fiscal year in order to capture student progression through Educational Functioning Levels. See the document, FY2018 and FY2019 Assessment Policies for specifics about pre- and post-testing with MAPT or TABE 9/10.

- STAR students enrolled in community adult learning centers must be pre-tested using the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT) for Reading before they reach 18 attendance hours and post-tested after 65 hours of instruction.

- STAR students in adult education programs in correctional institutions that do not have access to computers must be tested with the TABE Reading subtest, Forms 9/10, Levels E, M, D, or A. All students must be pre-tested before they reach 18 attendance hours but students can be pre-tested prior to enrollment. Post-test after 40 hours of instruction.

Learners must be tested with a NRS-approved standardized assessment no more than three times in a content area in a fiscal year.

All students who are pre- and post-tested must have a Primary Assessment Area; in the case of ABE students, that area may be in ABE Reading, or Math, or Writing. Programs that choose to test STAR students with MAPT for Math (or in the case of Adult Education in Correctional Institutions, with TABE 9/10 Math subtests) must also pre- and post-test students in Reading. Either Math or Reading may be selected as a STAR student’s Primary Assessment Area. For more information Primary Assessment Area, see the assessment policy manual.

Tests administered after April 30 may be copied over into the next fiscal year and used until December 31 following the end of that year. Any test administered within a fiscal year (i.e., July 1 to June 30) may be used as a pre-test for students who leave and return during that year.

All administered tests must be entered into the SMARTT database whether or not students made EFL gains and no exceptions are allowed. Assessment results must be recorded and reported accurately and in a timely manner.

Entering and Reviewing Data on Student Outcomes

SMARTT Class Plan Information

To identify a class as STAR, programs may select “STAR” as a drop-down option under Core Instruction in SMARTT. Programs that do so are committing to implementing STAR as outlined in STAR training and in the bullets on page 4 of this handbook.

To ensure the accuracy of learner gains at the state and national level, data for STAR classes must reflect the hours of instruction spent only on STAR that is integrated into ELA instruction at the GLE 4-8.9 level. To accomplish this goal, ACLS recommends that programs create separate ELA/STAR and math classes so the number of hours provided for instruction in each area is clear, rather than coding a class as core instruction. These practices will help to make data on STAR student learning gains as accurate as

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3 Effective FY2019, pre-ASE (GLE 4-8) students must be tested with both Reading and Math, including students enrolled in STAR classes at programs offering STAR.
possible. For questions about setting up the STAR class in a program plan, contact your Program Specialist.

**Reviewing Student Data**
As a best practice, the program director and STAR teacher should meet at least quarterly to discuss and review data related to performance in the STAR class. Particular attention should focus on formal and informal assessments, attendance, classroom observations, class groupings, class routines, and learner gains. For help in accessing data in Cognos, contact the SABES PD Center for Using SMARTT and Cognos.

**Program Planning for Sustainability**

*Managed Enrollment*

**STAR classes must use some form of managed enrollment** because it is a key component of evidence-based reading instruction. When students enter the classroom in an open enrollment model, it not only disrupts the flow of learning with established groups, it requires teachers to frequently regroup students. STAR teachers and trainers have found that a leveled class where enrollment is managed provides the best environment for successful implementation of STAR.

There are a number of ways to implement managed enrollment; for additional suggestions, see [STAR-recommended Managed Enrollment Strategies and Scenarios](#). One method would be to begin by only adding new students to the class every four weeks, as needed. Try managed enrollment for a period of time and then reevaluate. Changes such as this may take some time to work and become comfortable. Alternatively, the schedule below gives another example that provides longer spans of enrollment before adding new students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Procedure</th>
<th>Sample Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-planning week for the STAR teacher</td>
<td>8/15 – 8/19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer diagnostic assessments/Orientation</td>
<td>Week prior to class start date 8/22 – 8/26</td>
<td>Test on M, T, W – Teacher Determines Groups on Th or F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-week class session I</td>
<td>8/29 – 11/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAR Testing/Orientation</td>
<td>11/21 – 11/25</td>
<td>Thanksgiving week – Assign students/Regroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-week class session II</td>
<td>11/28 – 3/2</td>
<td>Includes Holiday breaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer diagnostic assessments/Orientation</td>
<td>3/5 – 3/9</td>
<td>Assign students/Regroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-week class session III</td>
<td>3/12 – 6/8</td>
<td>Includes Spring break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-planning week</td>
<td>6/11 – 6/15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more suggestions regarding the use of managed enrollment, see the [SABES PD Center for ELA’s STAR web page](#).
**Intensity**

Like managed enrollment, the intensity of instruction is an important variable in supporting student learning gains in the essential components of reading. Teachers need enough time to provide explicit instruction for all the leveled student groups in the four reading components. The number of hours per week needed will vary depending on the number of students in the class and how varied their needs are, and also whether or not a teacher has an instructional aide or volunteer to help with some groups. Programs that provide less than nine hours per week of instruction for their pre-ASE class must devote at least 50% of class instruction on evidence-based reading instruction.

Generally, more intensity is better than less, and research indicates that shorter, more frequent lessons are more effective than one longer session (e.g., one-hour STAR classes occurring three days per week are more effective than a three-hour class once weekly). STAR classes of as much intensity as possible offer teachers the opportunity to utilize evidence-based reading instruction to a greater extent and still have ample time to address other areas of instruction, such as math and writing. It is extremely difficult for teachers to successfully implement the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education in conjunction with STAR in fewer hours. Many programs find that offering at least nine hours per week for ABE instruction enables them to provide instruction in needed areas. During STAR training modules and on-site visits, programs will receive guidance in maintaining optimal intensity for STAR students.

**Training New Staff and Planning for Staff Turnover**

- Staff who will be teaching a pre-ASE (GLE 4-8) STAR class must participate in the entire STAR training. In order to ensure fidelity to STAR’s use of evidence-based reading instruction, teachers and directors involved in STAR must be trained by nationally-certified STAR trainers.

- In the course of participation, a STAR program may experience the loss of its STAR-trained instructor or director. In the instance of the loss of an instructor, that instructor’s class will not be considered a STAR class until a fully trained STAR instructor is in place. **Having accurate data for when STAR is taught in class (and when it is not) is critical to our efforts to evaluate the positive impact of STAR. Therefore, programs must inform Merilee Freeman and the Program Specialist at once when a STAR teacher leaves the program.** See page 5 for contact information.

**Volunteers**

Under the direction and guidance of the STAR-trained teacher, volunteers can be a great help in the classroom. For example, volunteers may assist with a small group of students on advanced alphabetics, while the teacher is working with another group on comprehension or fluency. Volunteers may also assist students needing additional support during a class activity. Volunteers may attend the STAR training and/or EBRI trainings offered by SABES. Volunteers who have received this training may administer diagnostic assessments under the supervision of the STAR teacher.

**Program Support for STAR Teachers**

There are a number of ways that program directors can support STAR teachers, thereby increasing the likelihood of student success in the STAR class. An experienced program director recommends the following best practices:

- Have teachers lay out their class schedules to ensure enough class time is allotted to EBRI activities as well as all the other aspects that are necessary parts of their STAR teaching routine.
In one program’s case, this resulted in a three-week cycle for one of their pre-ASE classes. It included time for introducing STAR vocabulary, vocabulary workbook practice, “Yes/No/Why” and “read and respond” EBRI activities, and reading fluency groups, as well as time blocks for math, writing, computers, etc. This practice was so helpful that other ASE and ESOL teachers adopted it, thus ensuring that teaching activities were targeted and prioritized routine lesson activities. Teachers ask themselves, “do we really have time to do x activity, and is it the best way to meet the learning objectives for the class?”

- Provide additional time for STAR lesson plan preparation. Because evidence-based reading instructional practices are explicitly taught, teachers need more time to prepare teaching materials and lesson plans. For example, STAR teachers who are full time may use the summer and other non-teaching weeks to develop all the vocabulary instructional materials (e.g., vocabulary quadrant charts, vocabulary prompts, and Yes/No/Why questions) to use with purchased EBRI vocabulary workbooks. Teachers may also use this time to identify leveled readings and develop “read and respond” questions. Experience shows a best practice for STAR implementation is to provide 1:1 prep time for STAR classroom teachers at a minimum, or 2:1 (prep to instruction).

- Set aside time for STAR support at monthly staff meetings, in addition to providing time for STAR teachers to work together and support each other’s growth as users of EBRI.

- Assist by administering diagnostic reading assessments, and include administration of diagnostic reading assessments during Student Orientation. When teachers are unable to complete all the diagnostic reading assessments themselves, the directors’ assistance will keep them more connected to STAR and enables the STAR class groupings to occur in a timely fashion.

- Purchase STAR-recommended and STAR appropriate books to use for vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension activities. Label all books with student reading levels (e.g., GLE 4-8).

Programs may use funds from their Community Adult Learning Center or Corrections grant to support:

- time for diagnostic assessment administration
- increased preparation or common planning time for STAR teachers and relevant staff
- purchase of STAR-recommended reading materials
- purchase of DAR or other diagnostic assessment consumable test booklets
- travel expenses to STAR-scheduled meetings and/or substitute teacher expenses

**State and National Support for STAR Programs**

Because fidelity to the STAR vision and to EBRI for intermediate level learners is essential for student success, ACLS and STAR trainers provide technical assistance to programs as outlined below:

**Initial STAR Training**

The STAR training is provided in an online, flipped classroom approach by Massachusetts STAR-certified trainers. Participants work through 30 online modules, of which half are online and self-paced; the remaining modules include webinars, program team meetings, opportunities for classroom practice, and written reflections on that practice.
In the self-paced online modules, EBRI is explained, modeled, and guided practice activities are provided. Then participants practice in class by applying what was learned with their own students. No time estimates are given for these practice and reflection modules as planning and lesson times will vary from teacher to teacher. In modules where participants are asked to plan and reflect, STAR trainers provide feedback and support, and participants may not move forward to the next module until they receive feedback from their trainer. Participants also receive feedback from other training participants from their program and from any staff members who participated in previous STAR training cohorts (if applicable), as they are also invited to participate in these meetings.

In addition to the self-paced modules, there is an introductory webinar, two face-to-face training days that allow participants to dig deeper into implementing what they have learned, and a webinar for participants who will be supporting teachers as coaches. Two optional modules provide additional information and support. Once a module is started, participants may go back to it at any time. Modules will be available to support participants, programs, and states as long as the website is available.

Appendix D provides a brief outline of the EBRI strategies for use with intermediate level learners titled Planning Menu of STAR Instructional Strategies. This menu of strategies is from the original six-day STAR face-to-face training. The instructional strategies listed may change during FY18 during the piloting of the revised STAR training offered from 2010 to 2017. ACLS and SABES will update this planning menu as needed and inform ABE programs if and when changes occur.

Early in the training, participants will be assigned a Massachusetts STAR trainer who will provide technical assistance to them on an ongoing basis. The program’s assigned STAR TA provider can help answer questions, and provide support in such tasks as developing an action plan or continuous improvement plan, as described below.

**Developing an Action Plan or Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)**

ABE programs that are new to STAR will develop an action plan during their STAR training. In subsequent years, updates to that action plan should be included in the program’s annual continuous improvement planning process (CIP). Adding STAR-specific goals to the CIP builds sustainability, ensures fidelity to the STAR vision, and leads to the goal of improving student outcomes. For example, if a program’s action plan included a goal that “the director will observe the STAR teacher twice per year,” that goal would be incorporated into the CIP, under the larger program goal of Improving Instructional Methods, with specific dates for the observations, feedback, and resources such as the STAR observation protocol. As with all improvement planning, the plan should be informed by data, including student outcome data.

**Classroom Observations by Program Directors**

Program director’s must 1) participate in site observation(s) and the debriefing session provided by the STAR TA provider, and 2) observe the STAR teacher at least once per year and submit their results to the STAR TA Provider. Directors should use the STAR observation forms provided in the STAR training. Directors may consult with their assigned STAR trainer for guidance and support.

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4 For more about the continuous improvement planning process as an indicator of quality, see Indicator 8 and Standard 8.4 in the *Indicators of Program Quality, June 2017* document.

5 Similarly, Standard 8.3 in the *Indicators of Program Quality, June 2017* document references the use of data to make informed decisions.
Technical Assistance and Classroom Observation by STAR TA Providers

All STAR programs will have one annual classroom observation by the STAR TA provider in order to (1) support the teacher in accurately identifying each student’s needs and responding to those needs and (2) support the director/coordinator in overseeing the implementation of STAR at their program. STAR TA providers will either conduct the observation through a visit to the program, or request that the teacher provide a video recording of her/his class instruction to them. More than one observation may take place if requested by the program or trainer and if time allows.

Observations are conducted to ensure fidelity to the STAR Vision as presented on page three of this handbook and to EBRI. During an observation, the STAR trainer may provide the teacher and director with feedback on the degree of accuracy with STAR and EBRI implementation. Because classroom observations are intended to support the success of the STAR teacher and the students in her/his class, program directors and teacher(s) will be asked to meet with the STAR trainer after the classroom observation for feedback and discussion. The STAR TA provider will contact the program director to schedule an observation visit.

Before the Class Observation: Required Preparation
The following documentation must be emailed to the STAR TA provider at least two days prior to the scheduled observation. Relevant forms and guidance can be accessed via the TA provider. Note: If the documentation is not received, the observation will be rescheduled, thereby delaying the receipt of valuable feedback that can affect student outcomes. As a reminder, the STAR TA provider will email the teacher one week prior to the scheduled visit and request the documentation below by the specified date. The email will be copied to the program director and the Program Specialist. Documentation includes:

1. Diagnostic assessment results for all students in the STAR class;
2. Class groupings based upon the diagnostic assessment results;
3. Daily STAR class routines;
4. Lesson plans for both the day before and the day of the observation.

After the Class Observation

- Following the observation (either face-to-face or virtual), the STAR TA provider will provide verbal feedback to the teacher and director, touching on the major points noted during the lesson.

- No later than two weeks after the observation, the STAR TA provider will send a written report to the program via email and copy the Program Specialist. The written report will include recommendations for future lesson planning and use of the STAR strategies, with special attention to aligning instructional strategies with student needs based on diagnostic assessment results.
Appendix A: Glossary

Alphabetics: The set of skills and abilities that enable readers to turn letter combinations into spoken words. Alphabetics includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics or word analysis ability, and rapid word recognition.

Comprehension: The conscious activities readers undertake to construct meaning from texts, to remember details and ideas, and to make use of text for their own purposes.

DAR: The Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) Interpretive Profile, 2nd edition is an individually administered set of tests to determine the appropriate level of instruction in the four components of reading: alphabetic, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The DAR is not designed to be a placement tool and should not be used for this purpose.

Diagnostic assessment: Diagnostic assessments are used to determine the causes of persistent learning problems and to formulate a plan for remedial action. (Linn and Gronlund, Measurement and Assessment in Teaching, 1995, p. 15). For determining the causes of reading difficulties, Massachusetts ABE programs may use the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) Interpretive Profile, 2nd edition, or other diagnostic assessments recommended on LINCS’ Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web page and LINCS diagnostic test resources.

Evidence-based reading instruction: Instructional practices that have been proven by systematic, objective, valid, and peer-reviewed research to lead to predictable gains in reading achievement.

Explicit instruction: An instructional approach in which the “teacher presents content clearly and directly, providing step-by-step instruction which includes explanation (i.e., why the teacher is teaching this strategy and how it will help students to improve their reading skills), modeling, followed by guided practice with feedback, independent practice, and frequent monitoring to ensure that they are able to continue to work independently. If students are not able to do so, they should participate in more guided practice with close monitoring from the teacher, with the goal of working independently. Similarly structured approaches are also called direct instruction, active teaching, or expository teaching.” (McShane, Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults, 2005, p. 155).

Fluency: The ability to read connected text accurately, at an adequate rate, with appropriate expression (i.e., prosody).

Managed enrollment: The practice of allowing students to enter a class during specific, predefined enrollment periods and participate in an instructional cycle with fixed start and end dates. The cohort of students under managed enrollment stays together through the duration of the instructional cycle with no additional student enrollments (either after a pre-determined date or not at all) for the duration (or a portion) of the class term. Compare to “open enrollment,” the practice of permitting students to enter a class at any time of the day, week, month, or year to replace exiting students.

Vocabulary: All the words for which an individual associates meanings. Vocabulary instruction should address the total number of word meanings known (breadth or vocabulary), the level of understanding of known words (depth of vocabulary), and how to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words (strategies).
Appendix B: DAR Administration Cheat Sheet for STAR

Note: page numbers given are the same for either Form A or B.

Alphabetics/Word Recognition

- Begin at the grade level the student received on the MAPT or TABE 9/10.
- The Word Recognition test directions are on page 14 of the Response Record.
- The Word Recognition lists of words are in the Student Book, pages 7-17.
- Mastery is 7 out of 10 words correct; if achieved, student moves up to the next level. Keep going until student receives 4 or more incorrect. The previous level is the mastery level. Remember, the mastery level here will determine the starting point of subsequent assessment components.
- For a score of Level 4 or below, the Phonics assessments need to be administered. This may be found in the Response Record on pages 4-13 (Phonological Awareness and Letters and Sounds sections) and continued on pages 18-26 (Word Analysis) of the Response Record.

Fluency/Oral Reading

- Begin the test at the mastery level for the Word Recognition test.
- Use the Fluency Scale from STAR, not the DAR instructions.
- The Oral Readings begin on page 27 of the Student Book for Levels 1-2 and on pages 30-37 of Student Book A for all other levels.
- The mastery level for fluency is the highest grade level of difficulty on which a student is rated a “3.” The instructional level for rate and prosody is the highest grade level rated a “2.” The instructional level for accuracy (alphabetic in contexts) is the highest grade level rated a “1.”

Vocabulary/Word Meaning

- Begin at the mastery level of the Alphabetics/Word Recognition test.
- The directions for the Word Meaning test are on page 49 of the Response Record. Additional directions are on page 25 of the Teacher’s Manual.
- The test is on pages 50-54 of the Response Record.
- The teacher reads: “What does ______ mean?”
- Mastery is three out of four correct.
- There are sample correct responses in the Response Record.

Silent Reading Comprehension

- Administer the Comprehension Interview/Student Questionnaire located in Appendix C.
- The DAR Silent Reading Comprehension test is optional; test administrators may use the directions on pages 7-8 of this handbook to determine a rough estimate of grade level to begin instruction.
- If administering the DAR Silent Reading Comprehension test, begin the test at the mastery level for the Word Recognition test, and continue with the bulleted directions below.
- Directions are on page 34 of Response Record for levels 1-2 and page 36 for all other levels.
- The readings and multiple choice questions are on pages 27-55 of the Student Book.
- After a student silently reads the passage, he/she will answer the multiple-choice questions.

NOTE: If a student achieves mastery in any of the components up to level 8, stop there and write that the student’s mastery level was 8+, which indicates that you didn’t administer any additional levels. This is perfectly acceptable to do. You may continue with administering the test if you prefer.
Appendix C: STAR Comprehension Interview/Student Questionnaire Form

Name _____________________ Date __________________________

1. Do you like to read? ___ Yes ___No ___Sometimes

2. In what languages do you read?

3. Outside of class what do you read?
   _____ Not much
   _____ Newspapers, which sections?
   _____ Magazines, which ones?
   _____ Books, what kind?

4. If I asked you to read something, how would you know if you were reading it well?

Directions: Choose a number to show how each statement fits you.

1 2 3 4 5
Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

5. Before I read something, I look at the title and the pictures and try to think what the reading will be about.

6. When I read something, I think about what my purpose is for reading it.

7. When I read, I stop every now and then to think about what I am reading.

8. When I read stories, I try to guess what will happen next.

9. I picture what is happening in the story when I read.

10. When I read, I slow down when something does not make sense.

11. I go back over parts I do not understand when I am reading.

12. When I read something, I think about how the reading fits with what I knew about the topic before reading.

13. When I read something, I ask myself questions about what I am reading and check to see if I have answered my questions.
### Appendix D: Planning Menu of STAR Instructional Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>HAVE USED BASED ON STUDENT NEED</th>
<th>WILL USE BASED ON STUDENT NEED</th>
<th>WITH WHOM / MY NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative Oral Reading</strong></td>
<td>✪ Good for accuracy, rate, and prosody ✤ Less scaffolding</td>
<td>1. Done in small groups with teacher. 2. Each person reads three to five lines of text and then passes the turn to another group member, including the teacher. 3. Turns are short, so even less fluent readers can participate comfortably. 4. Keep group small so each student has numerous opportunities to practice fluency.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Repeated Reading</strong></td>
<td>✪ Good for lower level fluency-more scaffolding ✤ good for accuracy</td>
<td>1. The student and teacher set goals. 2. The student performs an unpracticed reading with a short text at the target level. 3. The student hears a fluent reading of the text. 4. The student practices reading the text independently. 5. The student reads the text for the teacher.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Echo Reading</strong></td>
<td>✪ Good for accuracy, rate, and prosody ✤ Best done one-on-one for struggling reader who needs much support</td>
<td>1. Teacher selects a text to be read aloud. 2. The teacher reads the first sentence aloud and the learner repeats - or echoes - the sentence. 3. Once teacher and student have read/echoed each sentence, the teacher reads the entire paragraph aloud again. 4. The student then echoes the entire paragraph to ensure he/she is not just parroting back what was heard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marked phrase boundaries</strong></td>
<td>✪ Used for rate and prosody</td>
<td>1. Teacher prepares a text by marking it to show students where words should be grouped together to form meaningful &quot;chunks.&quot; 2. Teacher reads the marked text aloud while students follow along. 3. The teacher and students then practice reading the text together. 4. Students practice reading the marked text aloud on their own.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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6 The instructional strategies listed may change during FY18 during the piloting of the revised STAR training. ACLS will inform ABE programs if and when changes occur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY NAME</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marked phrase boundaries, continued</td>
<td>5. Instruction progresses until learners can mark phrases themselves - first on texts they have practiced with, then on new material - and eventually read unmarked text with appropriate phrasing.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### VOCABULARY

| Tier 2 Vocabulary Instruction | 1. Teacher introduces one meaning of each new Tier 2 word. | | | |
| Fill-in-blank, Cloze, or Sentence Completion | 1. Teacher provides exercises where new Tier 2 words are used in different contexts. | | | |
| Read & Respond | 1. Teacher provides short articles on topics of general interest. | | | |
| Yes/No/Why | 1. Teacher prepares questions in which new Tier 2 vocabulary words have been paired (e.g., “Is a commotion always conspicuous?”) | | | |
| Quadrant Chart | 1. One chart is filled out for each new word. | | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Opposites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY NAME</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALPHABETICS (if needed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Affixes | 1. Teacher provides groups of words with similar prefixes or suffixes.  
2. Students and teacher practice determining what words mean, or how they change, based on application of the affixes. | | | |
| Base Words | 1. Teacher provides groups of words with same base word root (e.g., interrupt, disrupt, bankrupt).  
2. Students and teacher practice determining what words mean, or how they change, based on their common base words or roots. | | | |
| **COMPREHENSION** | | | | |
| Summarizing | 1. Class reads text paragraph by paragraph; teacher asks for each paragraph, “What is the topic of this paragraph?”  
2. Teacher then asks, “What is the most important point the author makes about that topic?”  
3. Once important points are identified for each paragraph, teacher asks, “Is every point needed to understand the author’s ideas?” Points that are unnecessary are eliminated.  
4. Class joins the remaining points to create a summary of the text.  
5. Students may practice summarizing in small groups or on own. | | | |
| Questioning | 1. Teacher begins by discussing the words people use to form questions (e.g., what, why, how). Then, shows them how to ask questions about a text (e.g., “Who saved Joe from drowning?”)  
2. Teacher provides students with opportunities to practice questioning, in small groups and on their own.  
3. When both summarizing and questioning have been taught, teacher shows students how to combine the two strategies. | | | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-W-L Chart</td>
<td>1. Teacher makes table on board or newsprint. Students make copy of their own on paper.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I already know</td>
<td>W</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher presents topic or concept from a reading and asks the students what they already know about it, recording in K column.</td>
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<td>3. Teacher and students identify the K information that they think will be in the text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Teacher asks students what they want to know about the topic or concept, recording in W column.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Students read the passage and what they learned is recorded in the L column.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Class checks to see which column W questions are unanswered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text Marking</td>
<td>1. Students use codes throughout a reading as follows:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔️ I knew this before.                                                                (vertex)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! This was new to me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>? I’m not sure what this means.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher shows students how to mark a text, describing each of the codes.</td>
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<td>3. Class works together on a new text, discussing similarities and differences in the way each person would mark the text.</td>
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<td>4. Students work in pairs so that they can compare how they would mark a text with their partner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Students mark a text on their own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY NAME</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fix-Up Strategies</strong></td>
<td>1. Teacher asks students to quickly summarize what they just read.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher asks students to briefly retell what they just read.</td>
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<td>3. Teacher rates summary or retelling using rubrics from the Toolkit.</td>
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<td>4. A full list of other strategies “good readers” use is found in the STAR Toolkit.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text Structures</strong></td>
<td>★ Can be taught to show the link between reading and writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Teacher explains that authors organize information in text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Teacher provides examples: some authors want to tell a story (involving a setting, characters, actions, and consequences), explain how things are alike or different (compare/contrast), list some characteristics or facts about a topic (description), show how something operates (sequence), or explain how or why something happened in history (cause/effect).</td>
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<td>3. Teacher provides graphic representations of these structures and then, as a group, class discusses how to fill some in (e.g., a folk tale for a narrative, two countries for a compare/contrast, climate change for cause/effect.)</td>
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<td>4. Teacher gives students examples of texts that fit these patterns, and class works together to identify the text structures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Students practice recognizing text structures, in small groups and on their own.</td>
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