Evidence-Based Reading Instruction Q&A

*Revised August 2019*

# General Questions

**Q1. What does ACLS require for ABE Curriculum and Instruction?**

*A: See the Curriculum and Instruction section of the* ACLS FY2020-22 Massachusetts Policies for Effective Adult Education in Community Adult Learning Centers and Correctional Institutions*, at* [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/abeprogram/*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/abeprogram/)*.*

**Q2. Why are these four components of reading considered essential?**

*A: See the guidance on the ACLS Curriculum and Instruction EBRI and STAR webpage, at* [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html) *and the SABES ELA Curriculum and Instruction PD Center pages for EBRI and STAR, at* [*https://www.sabes.org/star*](https://www.sabes.org/star) *and* [*https://www.sabes.org/ebri*](https://www.sabes.org/ebri)*, respectively.*

**Q3. What is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction?**

*A. See the guidance on the ACLS Curriculum and Instruction EBRI and STAR webpage, at* [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html)*. ACLS has invested in SABES to develop targeted trainings on using EBRI at specific class levels; see more information in the ACLS EBRI Overview Chart at* [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html) *and at* [*https://www.sabes.org/ebri*](https://www.sabes.org/ebri)*.*

**Q4. How does EBRI differ from STAR?**

*A.* ***See the document* To the Point: WIOA, EBRI, and STAR *at*** [*https://www.sabes.org/content/point-wioa-ebri-star*](https://www.sabes.org/content/point-wioa-ebri-star)***, as well as the SABES ELA STAR and EBRI web pages mentioned in the response to Q2 above, and*** [*https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/studentachievementinreading*](https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/studentachievementinreading)*.*

**Q5. Please clarify whether EBRI is recommended or required.**

*A. Federal law* ***requires*** *that programs provide students with the appropriate combination and level of essential components of reading instruction to students at all levels, based on the results of their individual diagnostic assessment and ongoing formative assessments. The focus of our field moving forward is on improving student outcomes in EFL gains, student achievement of HSE, and for students to transition to postsecondary education and training. ACLS gives programs flexibility to decide how they will accomplish this requirement.*

**Q6. Are programs required to do STAR?**

*A. The STAR program is the leading resource OCTAE developed and promotes instruction in the essential components of reading for intermediate level ABE learners. No other professional development program has been developed for teaching evidence-based reading instructional practices geared to adult learners at GLE 4-8.*

*Consistent with ACLS’ focus on outcomes rather than processes, ACLS does not require STAR participation. EBRI, however, is the foundation of the STAR PD for teachers of intermediate (GLE 4-8) level learners. ACLS has invested in providing this intensive, high quality training for free to programs since 2010 because the evidence base for the training is proven to be successful. Find more information about STAR at* [*http://sabes.org/star*](http://sabes.org/star); *and* <https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/studentachievementinreading>.

*Programs opting to participate in STAR training must participate in and complete all training components. Find information on STAR at* [*http://sabes.org/star*](http://sabes.org/star) *and* [*https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/studentachievementinreading*](https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/studentachievementinreading).

# Questions about Funding/Logistics

**Q1. As a director, what are some of the factors I should be thinking about when planning for providing EBRI and STAR instruction?**

*A. Successful Implementation is twofold; one part is building one’s knowledge about EBRI and reading instruction; equally important is the second part, which is building program and staff capacity through program design.*

*Planning ahead for how to support implementation is critical for success. The following factors (not a complete list) are important for directors to keep in mind:*

* *Build in time for staff to gain EBRI knowledge and STAR and skills via SABES professional development;*
* *Build in additional time for teachers to administer diagnostic assessments and plan their EBRI instructional routines;*
* *Institute some form of managed enrollment (if it hasn’t been already) to support students over a period of time without accepting new students daily to the class. Managed enrollment is also very helpful to teachers;*
* *Plan set times for intake, enrollment, and diagnostic assessments administered by the teacher; and*
* *Plan to purchase some recommended EBRI instructional materials (e.g., Tier 2 vocabulary workbooks, leveled readers).*
* *Contact the SABES ELA Curriculum and Instruction PD Center for more information at*

[*https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela*](https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela)*.*

**Q2. With WIOA, I wonder what our programs are going to look like in FY2019. We are worried that our curriculum (that we have been working on for years!) might not be right.**

*A. The ultimate goal is for programs to support adult learners in achieving their outcomes of making EFL gains, achieving an HSE and transitioning to postsecondary education and training. EBRI compliments and strengthens CCRSAE-aligned curriculum because it helps amp up instruction. Programs are well on their way if they are aligning their curriculum and instruction to the CCRSAE. EBRI shouldn’t affect what you teach, but how you teach. Find the CCRSAE at* [*https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf*](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf)*.*

**Q3. Can you recommend ways that programs can find the time to add in EBRI instruction? It feels like something else that is getting slipped in when we don't even have time to do STAR justice in the STAR classes. We like STAR! That is not the problem. There just isn't enough time for all that our students need and all we have to do.**

*A: The goal is not to do more and to try to find extra time, but to be as strategic as possible with the little time you have with students. Since EBRI is evidence-based, there is research that backs up the effectiveness of these strategies and practices. Teachers and directors may wish to look strategically at what they are currently doing for beginner and advanced levels and evaluate their ability to support student outcomes. SABES provides EBRI training for these levels that helps teachers and directors understand how EBRI may differ from what teachers are currently using in the classroom. As with the goal of STAR EBRI strategies, the point is to replace, rather than supplement what you are doing. As a STAR trained program, if you have been developing curriculum by integrating STAR strategies with academic content, you can apply those same principles to focus on the reading components most in need at the beginner and advanced levels.*

# Questions about Training and other Support

**Q1. Please explain what training is available for staff teaching students at the beginner and advanced levels in the use of a) diagnostic assessment and b) EBRI techniques specific to those levels.**

*A. See the SABES ELA Curriculum and Instruction PD Center’s webpage for EBRI offerings, at* [*https://www.sabes.org/ebri*](https://www.sabes.org/ebri)*. In addition, SABES offers EBRI instructional coaches to support teacher implementation; contact the SABES PD Center at* [*https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela*](https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela)*.*

**Q2. How time-intensive (e.g., number of hours) do you anticipate the EBRI training to be?**

*A. The majority of EBRI training sessions are online; see the SABES ELA Curriculum and Instruction PD Center’s webpage for EBRI offerings, at* [*https://www.sabes.org/ebri*](https://www.sabes.org/ebri) *f*or more information about length of time*.*

**Q3. Do teachers previously trained in STAR need training in EBRI?**

*A. No, unless they also teach a beginner (GLE 0-3) and/or advanced (GLE 9-12) level class, as some of the strategies and instructional approach will be adjusted for student needs at the beginner and advanced levels.*

**Use of Diagnostic Assessments**

**Q1. What is diagnostic testing, and why is it important?**

*A: Diagnostic assessment is given to individual students for the purpose of determining reading strengths and needs in the four essential reading components. Research suggests that identifying students’ specific needs targets the resulting instruction and speeds up learning, providing positive reinforcement and motivation to a student to persevere.*

**Q2. Is administering a diagnostic assessment recommended or required?**

*A. Administering diagnostic assessment to adult students before instruction begins is a research-based practice at all levels and a critical component and foundation of EBRI. Any programs that opt to be trained in the STAR program are required to use a diagnostic assessment with their intermediate level students.*

**Q3. What diagnostic assessment should be used at the GLE 0-3 and 9-12 levels? How will training take place? How long will it take to administer the assessments?**

*A. See information about the online SABES Diagnostic Assessments of Reading training at* [*https://www.sabes.org/event/13011*](https://www.sabes.org/event/13011). *For training dates, contact the* *SABES PD Center at* [*https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela*](https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela)*. It should not take programs a significant amount of time or cost a lot of money to determine the correct instructional level and strengths and weaknesses for each student.*

**Q4. As a teacher trained in STAR, I have used the DAR (*Diagnostic Assessments in Reading*) with my intermediate level (GLE 4-8) students. Must I use the DAR with beginner (GLE 0-3) and advanced (GLE 9-12) level students also?**

*A: No, not unless the teacher and program director wish to. SABES will be providing training on how to administer and score free diagnostic assessments.*

# Recommended Practices for Reading Instruction at all Levels

**Q1. Do I need to teach EBRI in all four components?**

*A: The components to focus on depend on the diagnostic assessment results and the reading level of the student. Research suggests that it is most effective to focus on the following reading components for students at these three levels:*

* *Beginner level (GLE 0-3) priority focus should be on building alphabetics and fluency skills using EBRI strategies in these two components. A smaller focus may be placed on building vocabulary skills in Tier 2 and needed Tier 1 words, also using EBRI strategies;*
* *Intermediate level (GLE 4-8) priority focus should be on two or three of the four components, but without administering a diagnostic assessment it is impossible to know which of the components are most needed. Individual students’ needs vary in terms of which of the four components are most needed to be addressed in instruction; and*
* *Advanced level (GLE 9-12) priority focus should be on building vocabulary and comprehension skills using EBRI strategies in these two components. A smaller focus may be placed on reading texts at the GLE 9-12 level fluently, also using EBRI strategies.*

*Find more information on pages 2 and 3 in the document,* *EBRI Overview Chart,* *at* [*http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html*](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html)and attend professional development in EBRI techniques.

**Q2. There are many EBRI Strategies. How do I know which ones to use with my students?**

*A: Knowing which strategies are most appropriate for particular reading instruction levels and how to implement these strategies is the focus of professional development. Teachers who participate in SABES professional development will be better prepared for providing students with the appropriate EBRI practices to move them ahead.*

**Q3. Why aren’t comprehension strategies taught at every level, beginner through advanced?**

*A: A failure to comprehend may be the consequence, not the cause, of a reading problem. This concept is an important one that is covered in detail in SABES professional development. For a brief explanation, see the 2010 document,* The Massachusetts ABE Revised Reading Strand’s Section 4: Supporting Research and Implications for Teaching, *by John Strucker, at* [*http://www.sabes.org/content/revised-reading-strand-ma-curriculum-frameworks*](http://www.sabes.org/content/revised-reading-strand-ma-curriculum-frameworks)*.*

**Q4. Has there been any consideration of reviews of the different reading instructional methods (e.g., Orton Gillingham) and their effectiveness in ABE that could be shared with the field?**

*A. ACLS staff already performed this already and consulted with national reading experts. The resulting information in the document, Provision of Instruction in the Essential Components of Reading: Guidance for FY2018 was informed by their expertise.*

**Q5. Is there an online resource review or compilation of reviews of vocabulary texts?**

*A. No, but a compilation of EBRI recommended resources is on the list of items SABES intends to create.*