

A Teacher’s Guide to the College & Career Readiness Standards for Level A and Level B Adult Learners (GLE 0-1.9 and GLE 2-3.9)

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Contents:

- 1) Introduction / Overview (p. 1)
 - 2) Six Takeaways (p. 3)
 - 3) Descriptions, Supporting Research, and Implications for Teaching (p. 5) for Level A and Level B
 - 4) Development and Organization of the CCRSAE (p.22)
 - 5) Annotated CCRSAE (p.25) for Level A and Level B
 - 6) References (p. 60)
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INTRODUCTION

This guide offers assistance in two areas for teachers of adult learners at GLE 0–3.9 with the English Language Arts portion of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE) [Pimentel, S., et al., 2013]:

1. Helping teachers think about how they can implement the CCRSAE for ELA in real-world ABE classrooms, and
2. Suggesting ways to bridge the gap between the standards and instruction.

Some of the questions addressed include:

- ❖ Based on Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (EBRI), what should be the instructional priorities for Level A and Level B learners?
- ❖ Which standards overlap with each other, and can therefore be combined in one lesson or activity?
- ❖ What familiar classroom activities already address some of the standards?
- ❖ What new recommendations from the CCRSAE should teachers prioritize?

Viewed one at a time, virtually all the CCRSAE appear worthwhile. The problem for ABE practitioners is that the CCRSAE are very extensive. For Level A alone, there are over 30 separate ELA standards (called “anchors”) in the areas of Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening, and Language. On top of that, some anchors also include sub-lists of up to a dozen specific skills and competencies. ABE teachers might well ask, “How can we possibly address all of these standards and competencies, given that we meet with our learners for only 3-5 hours a week?”

Begin with “[Six Takeaways from the CCRSAE](#)”: they frame the rest of the guide, and highlight two vitally important topics that the CCRSAE leave out.

The guide first [focuses on Level A and B learners](#). Based on research and experience, what do we know about them? What are their backgrounds, strengths and needs in reading, and the instructional methods that work best with them?

This is followed by a [brief overview of CCRSAE](#)—its organization, terminology, and abbreviations.

The remainder of the guide examines the standards themselves: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. [Each standard is annotated with a comment reflecting the author's judgement and opinion, based on EBRI and best practices](#). Some comments point out redundancies between one standard and another that would allow teachers to address two or more standards with one activity. Others suggest common instructional activities already in use that might fulfill a “new” standard. In a few cases, comments offer the author's opinion that a particular standard may be inappropriate for learners at this level or impractical in real-world ABE classrooms.

It should be emphasized that the author's comments are his own and do not represent official positions of ACLS (the Adult and Community Learning Services unit at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) or of SABES (the Adult Education Professional Development System of ACLS). The purpose of the comments is not to dictate “right answers,” but to stimulate reflection and discussion.

The CCRSAE as written are abstract and spare. Only teachers can bring them to life in the classroom.

SIX TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CCRSAE FOR LEVEL A (GLE 0-1.9) AND LEVEL B (GLE 2-3.9)

I. The biggest change in the CCRSAE from previous adult education standards is the new emphasis on developing language (including vocabulary) and reading comprehension skills for Level A (GLE 0-1.9) and Level B (GLE 2-3.9) learners. This is one of the ways in which they differ from the Massachusetts ELA Frameworks for Adults that they replaced, and is in keeping with recent US DOE recommendations for reading instruction for K-3 children (Foorman, B., et al. 2016). In the past, the primary focus of early reading instruction for children and adults was alphabetic—i.e., learning to decode print. Although this is still the case, the new guidelines recognize that for beginning readers, children or adults, to eventually become skilled at higher levels of reading comprehension, they need early exposure to academic language and analytic approaches to thinking about texts. Like K-3 children, Level A and B adults have limited decoding skills, so exposure to academic vocabulary and analytic approaches to texts will of necessity take place through oral language activities and classroom discussions.

II. The amount of space devoted to the various topics in CCRSAE is emphatically not an indication of the proportion of instructional time that should be devoted to the topics. Specifically, while the Foundational Skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and fluency) occupy less than one-third of the entire CCRSAE, Foundational Skills would normally occupy at least two-thirds of Level A and B learners' instructional time. The remaining one-third of their instructional time can be used to work on language (vocabulary), and comprehension of informational and literary texts that are read to learners or available via podcasts and videos.

III. The CCRSAE focus on three areas of reading—Complexity: Regular practice with complex text and its academic language; Evidence: Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational; and Knowledge: Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction (Pimental, et al., 2013; pps. 9-10). However, because Level A and B adults' decoding is limited to simple texts from GLE 1 to GLE 4, Complexity, Evidence, and Knowledge can best be approached through discussions of texts that are read aloud to learners, or through videos or podcasts. A note of caution: Level A and B learners struggled in their K-12 school years, so they have

limited vocabulary and content knowledge. Just because material is presented orally or via videos or podcasts does not necessarily mean learners will be able to understand it. Teachers need to choose material that is accessible to their learners.

IV. At first glance, the CCRSAE seem like an impossibly long and daunting set of recommendations. However, there is considerable overlap and repetition across the standards. Because of this overlap, it is often possible for one instructional activity or set of classroom practices to contribute simultaneously to two or more standards. For example, in a classroom discussion following a story read to the learners, the teacher can ask text-dependent or text-analytical questions about the story (How does the author show the contrast Maria and Anna's different attitudes toward marriage?) that also uses academic (Tier 2) vocabulary (contrast, attitudes).

V. The CCRSAE do not mention diagnostic assessment in reading. Yet diagnostic assessment is critical for effective teaching of Level A and B learners. Specifically, teachers need to find out:

- Which decoding skills they have mastered, which need to be reviewed, and which need be taught – as well as how they tackle unknown words, and,
- For oral vocabulary, both breadth (Grade Level Equivalent of the words they know) and depth (how well they understand words they know).

VI. The CCRSAE do not mention the prevalence of severe reading disabilities or other learning disabilities among Level A and B learners (e.g., Chall, J. 1994; Strucker and Davidson, 2003; Lesgold & Welch-Ross, eds., 2012), nor is there any mention of accommodations or assistive technology that might benefit such learners. These omissions should not be taken to mean that these areas are unimportant. Teachers and programs need to be aware of the range of accommodations and forms of assistive technology that are available. Where appropriate, we should implement classroom accommodations and also help learners gain access to assistive technology that can improve the quality of their lives in and out of the classroom.

| [➤Return to the Introduction](#)◀ |

LEVEL A AND LEVEL B LEARNERS FOR ABE: DESCRIPTIONS, SUPPORTING RESEARCH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

First, a note to clarify the terminology used in this document. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) refers to Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) 0-1.9 for adult learners as "Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy" to and GLE 2-3.9 as "Adult Basic Literacy". However, the College and Career Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE) use letter designations for the various levels of ABE English Language Arts. The CCRSAE refers to GLE 0-1.9 adult learners as Level A and to GLE 2-3.9 learners as Level B. This document will use the CCRSAE terminology.

Level A

- [Describing Level A Learners](#)
- [Instructional Priorities](#)
- [Instructional Approaches](#): Alphabets, Fluency, Vocabulary and Language
- [Assessment Priorities](#): Alphabets, Word Reading and Fluency, Adding Vocabulary Assessment

Describing Level A (Beginning ABE Literacy) GLE 0-1.9 Learners

Although Level A begins at GLE 0, very few native-born adults in developed countries such as the United States actually have GLE 0 reading ability, meaning they possess absolutely no reading skills. Nearly all U.S.-born Level A learners have been exposed to some reading instruction in school. As a result, most retain some basic reading skills. For example, learners in the ABE Level 1 clusters in the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) (Strucker & Davidson, 2003) knew the names of most of the letters, could identify some of the letter sounds (phonemes), and were able to read a few sight words. Therefore, most U.S.-born Level A learners are able to function to a limited degree in the world of print in their everyday lives: they can usually identify some food and product labels, they operate electronic devices like smart phones, TV remotes, and online games, and they are aware of the purposes and uses of books, magazines, and other forms of print communication (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2005; Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 2015).

Although most Level A learners possess a few reading skills, their defining characteristic is their lack of mastery of those skills (Strucker & Davison, 2003). Most importantly, they have not mastered alphabets, the set of early reading skills that support the decoding of printed language into its spoken language equivalents. Alphabets includes rapid letter identification, phonemic awareness (the awareness that speech is made up of a sequence of sounds that can be isolated and manipulated—changed, added, or subtracted—to form different words) and word analysis or phonics (the relationships between the sounds of words and their spelling).

Most Level A learners also lack speed and automaticity with critical basic decoding skills such as instant and automatic letter recognition. Although Level A learners can usually identify nearly all the letters of the alphabet, many of them are only able to do so slowly and laboriously. Many cannot even generate the letters of the alphabet in proper sequence - a, b, c, etc. And, while they may be able to produce a few of the letter-sounds when presented with printed letters, their knowledge of those sounds is slow and halting rather than automatic and precise. This in turn makes it slow, exhausting, and uncertain for them to use their knowledge of letter sounds to sound out words.

Important point:

Practitioners should not assume that when Level A learners exhibit partial knowledge of alphabets, this means those skills do not need to be taught, reviewed, and practiced to the level of automaticity.

Automaticity is the ability to perform a task without thinking about it. When skilled readers decode printed words into their sounds, they are not aware of this process. This leaves most of their mental energy free to concentrate on the meaning of the text and to be active readers who are able to ask questions, decide relevance, and relate the text to one's background knowledge or other texts.

Not only have Level A learners not mastered alphabets, they experience great difficulty acquiring these skills even after they enroll in ABE classes. Most Level A adults in the Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) (Strucker and Davidson, 2003) reported difficulties with reading when in kindergarten and first grade, the years when children

are first exposed to alphabets. Not surprisingly, most of those who attended U.S. public schools reported receiving extra help in reading in the form of pull-out programs like extra tutoring, Title 1/Chapter 1, and Special Education. This suggests that their teachers recognized that they were struggling readers who needed extra help. This level of severe and persistent difficulty acquiring the basic sound-symbol relationships—also called the “core phonological deficit”—is regarded by reading teachers and researchers as the main characteristic of reading disability or dyslexia in children and adults (Bruck, 1990; Shaywitz, 1996; Swanson & Hsieh, 2009).

Because Level A learners find it so difficult to acquire sound-symbol relationships, they need deliberate, step-by-step instruction that includes many opportunities for practice and review. For example, simply explaining the silent-e rule and giving them a few examples of silent-e words will neither lead to their mastery of the silent-e pattern nor their ability to recognize it in new silent-e words. In fact, for many Level A learners, such brief exposures to alphabets do not lead to retaining knowledge from one class to the next.

Finally, because they have not been able to read to gain information and concepts, their vocabulary is often stuck at conversational levels (GLE 4 or below), and their background knowledge about science, civics, and literature is also severely limited (Strucker & Davidson, 2003). As a result, even when higher level texts are read to them (eliminating the need for decoding), they still may have difficulty comprehending passages about unfamiliar topics, because they lack the necessary concept development, content-specific vocabulary, or background of knowledge. This is also likely to be true with videos if the videos use higher level vocabulary or assume background knowledge the learners are missing.

Instructional Priorities for Level A Learners

Given that Level A adults face challenges in every aspect of reading, what should be their instructional priorities, and how should their instructional time be allotted?

One way to approach this issue is to consider the reading process itself. It begins when the reader recognizes a string of letters as a word, accesses its spoken language equivalent (pronunciation), and its meaning. Proficient readers accomplish all of this within ¼ second per word, and they carry this process effortlessly forward from word to word, phrase to phrase, and sentence to sentence (Adams, 1990; Rayner, 1998). It is

almost as if the text is “talking to them.” Moreover, for proficient readers these activities occur with little conscious effort, leaving their minds free to think about what the text is saying, compare it to previous information, and make judgments about its relevance and accuracy, as well as the writer’s purpose and tone.

However, because of their severe difficulties with alphabets, Level A readers are blocked during the initial ¼ second of the reading process in which letter strings are recognized as words and their spoken language equivalents are accessed. As Chall (1983) put it, their main priority is “unlocking print,” literally learning to read, meaning they must learn the basics of how to decode words and recognize them quickly. This inability to decode has prevented them and continues to prevent them from being able to read to learn – that is, being able to use reading to acquire new vocabulary, information, and knowledge. Therefore, the primary goal of Level A instruction should be the development of learners’ mastery of basic decoding skills.

What instructional approaches work best for Level A (GLE 0-1.9) Learners?

ALPHABETICS

Although few “what works” studies have been done with GLE 0-1.9 readers, we can generalize from what is known about children who struggle with alphabets, because, after all, most of our adult beginners were once struggling young readers. But first, let’s consider what doesn’t work: there is strong research evidence that struggling beginning readers do not fare well when decoding skills are taught piecemeal or incidentally—e.g., teaching a phonics principle only when it crops up randomly in a text or language experience story. Instead, what works best are direct and systematic approaches to teaching word analysis and decoding (National Reading Panel, 2000; Kruidenier et al., 2012). Direct and systematic approaches to teaching decoding are usually referred to as “structured language approaches” (SLAs).

Most SLAs share these features:

- Direct, explicit teaching of decoding principles, i.e., readers are taught the pronunciations of letters and spelling patterns directly, not asked to infer them from their similarities in lists of words or based on their context in a sentence.
- Systematic instruction, i.e., well-designed formats and templates for activities that are repeated and reused from lesson to lesson. This helps learners to concentrate

on what is being taught, rather than wasting energy or worrying about learning new procedures for every class.

- An optimal sequence for teaching phonics, i.e., a sequence based on linguistic analyses of the structure of English sounds and spelling, starting with the smallest units (sounds, letters, letters and sounds together) and moving to the spelling patterns and their pronunciations in words and syllables.
- Emphasis on teaching decoding using the synthetic phonics approach, i.e., in which the reader converts letters into sounds, then blends those sounds to produce recognizable words, e.g., /c/-/a/-/t/ = *cat*. Research has found synthetic phonics to be the best approach to employ with reading disabled children and adolescents (NRP, 2000). Among its advantages, it proceeds from left-to-right like the movement of our eyes as we read, and it directs the reader's attention to each letter in turn, skipping none.
- Ample opportunities for practice, review, and mastery, sometimes called "over-learning" or "learning to automaticity."

Most SLAs also employ some multi-sensory techniques (Birsch & Carreker, 2019); for example, practicing the spelling of sight words by "sky-writing" them in the air or finger-tapping letter-sounds when decoding or spelling words.

A number of SLA approaches for GLE 0-1.9 learners are used in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the U.S., including:

- Orton-Gillingham <http://www.orton-gillingham.com/>
- The Wilson Reading System <http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/>
- Lindamood-Bell <http://www.lindamoodbell.com/>
- Reading Horizons <http://www.readinghorizons.com/>

These approaches are very similar in their broad contours, and all owe much to Orton-Gillingham, the original SLA. All employ instruction that is direct, systematic, sequential, and multi-sensory – with many opportunities for review, practice, and over-learning. All require extensive training for teachers, usually including supervised practicums leading to certification. Most are also designed as complete packages with assessment/locator tools, sequenced lesson plans, and complete instructional materials. Some SLAs also include computer-based activities and support.

In addition to these SLAs, Sylvia Greene's *Basic Literacy Kits I and II* (Greene, 1996) should be mentioned. Greene is a Wilson-trained teacher who taught beginning adult readers for many years at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA. She developed her Literacy Kits specifically for ABE Level A and B learners. Importantly, her kits include informal word analysis (phonics) and sight word assessments to help determine what decoding skills learners already possess and what skills they need to master. The instructional materials include sequenced phonics lessons, sample practice exercises and worksheets, and a controlled basal reader¹, *Sam and Val*. (If you are a teacher of Level A or B adults, you should take Sylvia Greene's [SABES](#) Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (EBRI) course: *Alphabetics*. Unlike the other SLA trainings listed above, this excellent course is free to all Massachusetts adult educators.)

FLUENCY

Because Level A learners' needs in alphabetics are so obvious, it is possible to overlook fluency instruction. But this is a mistake. Alphabetics and fluency support each other – working on either one without the other is unlikely to succeed. Alphabetics instruction at the letter-sound and word level will not stick if learners don't get opportunities to practice newly-acquired alphabetics skills in the course of oral reading of meaningful, connected texts. That's why Sylvia Greene's *Basic Literacy Kit* includes the controlled basal reader *Sam and Val*. Repeated oral reading practice with *Sam and Val* allows learners to become more automatic at word recognition. When it comes to fluency instruction, accuracy and expression should be emphasized over rate.

As a general rule, for every 15 minutes spent on direct instruction in phonics (word analysis) and word recognition, at least 30 minutes should be spent on oral reading of meaningful texts. Bear in mind that for best results, not just any text at their level will work. The most effective texts are controlled basal readers that are made up of words that closely match the sequence of phonics skills and sight words being taught.

¹ *Sam and Val* is termed a "controlled basal reader" because the words used in its stories closely follow the sequence in which the phonics patterns taught in the Greene's *Literacy Kits*. The result is that readers are always reading text that is almost entirely comprised of words and word patterns they've already learned to decode and/or recognize as sight words. This in turn means that they are better able to read that text fluently. The critical importance of *fluency* is discussed in the next section on Level B GLE 2-3.9 learners.

VOCABULARY and LANGUAGE

It's important to note that Level A adult learners' GLE 0-2 decoding skills are substantially below their oral vocabulary, which can range from GLE 3 to GLE 5 and above. This means that the simple texts they are able to read seldom contain words whose meanings they don't already know, nor do they include unfamiliar topics. This is by design. Controlled basal readers are constructed with familiar words and predictable stories so that beginning readers can concentrate all their energy on developing smooth automatic decoding.

One of the more significant changes in the CCRSAE from previous adult standards is the recognition that both Level A and Level B learners should receive instruction in vocabulary. Although Level A learners' reading materials are not sources for new words and concepts, their language and vocabulary skills can be strengthened through oral language activities and class discussions. Teachers can read texts aloud to Level A learners, or use videos and podcasts to introduce vocabulary and concepts in the areas of basic science, social studies, literature, and career readiness.

Assessment priorities for Level A learners

Given their Level A learners' severely limited reading skills, the MAPT is not appropriate because its scaled scoring does not extend below GLE 2. Some programs use the TABE 11-12 Level L with GLE 0-1.9 learners for placement purposes (to establish that a learner belongs in a Level A class), but it is not nearly as informative for instructional purposes as the assessment recommended below.²

ALPHABETICS

ACLS guidelines call for assessing Level A learners in Alphabetics and Fluency. It is important to note that unlike entering 1st grade children, most of whom begin the year with almost no decoding skills, Level A adult readers arrive with very mixed and varying amounts of phonics and decoding knowledge. Therefore, to inform and plan instruction for Level A adult, it is absolutely necessary that teachers know in detail which letter sounds and phonics principles a learner has mastered, which need to be reviewed, and which will need to be taught from scratch.

² The TABE Level L is advertised to cover phonological awareness, phonics, and word recognition, but since it is group-administered, even this information may not be reliable. Most experts agree that these components of early reading can only be assessed through one-on-one testing.

The only way to get this information is to administer a one-on-one test of phonics (aka word analysis) such as Sylvia Greene's *Informal Word Analysis Inventory* (IWAI) (Greene, 1996a). Greene's IWAI tracks the same phonics progression that is used by all the structured language approaches. The commercially available SLAs such as Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood-Bell, or Reading Horizons all include proprietary phonics placement tests. Another excellent phonics test is part of the *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading – 2nd edition (DAR-2) Word Analysis subtest* (Chall, et al., 2011). It provides a wide range of information covering phonemic awareness, basic letter naming, basic phonics, and advanced phonics up through the syllabication and pronunciation of multi-syllable words.

WORD READING and FLUENCY

Word reading (reading words in isolation) can be assessed by using graded word lists such as those on the *Quick Adult Reading Inventory* (QARI) (Chall & Strucker) or the *DAR-2 Word Recognition subtest*. Fluency (connected text) for Level A learners can be assessed using any GLE 1-3 oral reading test, including the DAR-2, which has texts designed for young children. For example, the *Bader Reading and Language Inventory* (Bader, 1998) includes graded oral reading passages and is much less expensive than the DAR-2.

Instead of using a children's test, teachers can ask Level A adults to read short sections from grade-leveled texts like Challenger 1 and 2 (Murphy, 1985). Using leveled texts rather than published tests won't yield a precise grade-level score for fluency, but it will provide important diagnostic information to guide instruction.

Important point:

When assessing word reading and fluency for Level A and B learners, the GLE mastery levels are far less important than carefully recording the details of specific miscues and how the reader tackles unknown words.

Is there a pattern to the learner's miscues? e.g., Certain short vowels and not others? Silent-e words? Words beginning with blends like /tr-/ or digraphs like /ch-/? Word endings like -ed or -ing? Are the word reading miscues related to the problem areas in the phonics test?

What decoding strategies does the learner use when she encounters an unknown word? Does she try to sound it out, or make guesses based on the first letter or the general appearance of the word? If the reader makes guesses while reading a fluency paragraph, are they random guesses or based on the context?

ADDING VOCABULARY ASSESSMENT

As noted above, the ACLS guidelines do not include assessing Level A learners in vocabulary (aka, "word meaning"). But there are at least two important reasons for administering a one-one-one oral expressive vocabulary test such as the Davidson-Bruce Word Meaning Test (Davidson & Bruce, 2000) or the DAR-2 Word Meaning Test (Chall, et al., 2011).

First, given that the CCRSAE encourage developing the vocabulary and language skill of Level A learners, it makes sense for teachers to have sense of the range of learners' abilities in this area in order to inform teaching. For example, if most learners in a class have oral vocabulary between GLE 4 and GLE 6, this would suggest that they would be able to benefit from videos and podcasts to develop vocabulary and to improve content area knowledge. The teacher would also know that she could read texts to them that were as high as GLE 6. On the other hand, if most learners in a class have oral vocabulary below GLE 4, the range of videos and podcasts would be narrower, as would the range of texts that that could be read to them.

Second, an oral vocabulary test can help to identify those English Language learners (ELLs) who should be placed in ESL classes instead of ABE classes. Some ELLs are very fluent in Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which leads programs to believe they belong in ABE programs. However, their Cognitive Academic Literacy Proficiency (CALP)³ English vocabulary is actually quite low—below GLE 2 (Strucker and Davidson, 2003). English Language Learners with limited English vocabulary can make

³ ESL teachers are familiar with the BICS vs CALP distinction. It is not uncommon for some non-native English speakers to possess fluent Basic Interpersonal Communication skills (BICS) in English. Their BICS ability enables them to carry on fluent conversations about their work, the weather, and family matters. But they lack the higher-level Cognitive Academic Skills Proficiency (CALP) vocabulary needed to read English above basic levels. It is much easier for them to acquire CALP in ESL 2 or 3 classes than in ABE Level A. (For a concise description of BICS and CALP see Haynes, J. "Explaining BICS and CALP" at <https://secondaryellinsurrey.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/explaining-bics-and-calp.pdf>)

better progress in regular Beginning ESL Classes (if they are literate in their native languages) or ESL Literacy Classes (if they are not literate in their native languages) than they can in ABE Level A or B classes. An oral vocabulary assessment is the best way to identify those fluent BICS speakers who need to strengthen their English CALP vocabulary.

The best assessments to use expressive oral vocabulary tests such as the Davidson-Bruce Word Meaning Test (2000) or the DAR-2 Word Meaning test (Chall, et al., 2011). They are called expressive vocabulary tests because the student tells what he knows about the meaning of the target word in his own words, and the teacher records the learner's answers verbatim. Expressive vocabulary tests reveal not only the learner's vocabulary GLE level (vocabulary breadth), but how thoroughly and precisely he understands the words he knows (vocabulary depth). Depth of vocabulary knowledge is an important contributor to reading comprehension.

| [Return to the Introduction](#) |

Level B (GLE 2-3.9)

- [Describing Level B Learners](#)
- [Instructional Approaches](#): Alphabetics, Fluency, Vocabulary
- [Assessment Priorities](#): Alphabetics, Fluency, Vocabulary

Describing Level B Learners

Level B learners' reading comprehension ranges from GLE 2-3.9; however, they often present two very different profiles of strengths and needs in reading (Davidson and Strucker 2002; Strucker, 1997).

One profile, made up of native speakers of English, closely resembles Level A GLE 0-1.9 learners, but with slightly higher levels of decoding skills. Like the Level A adults, they have moderate-to-severe difficulties with alphabetics – phonemic awareness, phonics (word analysis), word reading, and fluency. Like the Level A 0-1.9 learners, most of the Level B learners who attended U.S. public schools report receiving extra help in reading in the form of pull-out programs like extra tutoring, Title 1/Chapter 1, and Special Education (Strucker & Davidson, 2003), suggesting that their k-12 teachers recognized that they were struggling readers who needed extra help. This level of severe and persistent difficulty acquiring the basic sound-symbol relationships—also called the “[core phonological deficit](#)”—is regarded by reading teachers and researchers as the main characteristic of reading disability or dyslexia in children and adults (Shaywitz, 1996; Bruck, 1990, 1992; Swanson & Hsieh, 2009).

Their oral vocabulary can range above GLE 5, but their GLE 2-3 decoding skills limit their reading comprehension to GLE 2-3 levels. In short, similar to Level A learners, they know the meanings of more words than they can decode. If they can improve their decoding, their reading comprehension will be able to rise to the level of their oral vocabulary.

A second common profile among GLE 2-3.9 learners is made up of non-native speakers of English, or English Language Learners (ELLs). They are often fluent at basic English speaking and listening as a result of taking ESL classes and living for years in English-speaking environments. However, many of them have limited schooling in their native languages and limited ability to read them. This means they may not have acquired much academic vocabulary and school-based content knowledge in their native

languages. Despite their English conversational fluency, their English oral vocabulary level can be surprisingly low at GLE 2 or below. (Strucker and Davidson, 2003; Davidson and Strucker, 2002).

Alphabeticity is a relative strength for these learners, and many show no signs of reading disabilities. This is especially true for native speakers of Spanish who are literate in Spanish because Spanish syllable structure is similar to English. What they don't already know about English alphabeticity and decoding they can usually acquire readily, if they are taught systematically and sequentially. On the other hand, non-native speakers whose native languages use very different alphabets from English (e.g., Arabic or Eritrean) or very different writing systems (e.g., Chinese) may experience greater difficulty acquiring English alphabeticity. Structured language approaches (SLAs) are especially useful for them. In contrast with the members of the first profile, they can decode (pronounce accurately) more words than they know the meanings of. As they improve their English vocabulary knowledge, their comprehension will be able to rise to the level of their decoding.

Teachers of 2-3.9 learners usually find themselves balancing the needs of these two distinct groups. But not every learner will fall clearly into either of these two profiles - some native speakers may have oral vocabulary levels that are nearly as low as those of non-native speakers, and some non-native speakers may also have severe difficulties with decoding.

What instructional approaches work best for Level B (GLE 2-3.9) Learners?

As discussed immediately above, there are two distinct profiles among Level B learners:

1. Native speakers of English with phonologically-based reading disabilities, much like Level A learners;
2. Non-native speakers of English whose main challenge is lack of literate or CALP vocabulary in English.

Because of this, it makes sense to go through the components of instruction, noting where instruction may differ from one profile to the other.

ALPHABETICS

The goal of alphabets instruction is the same for both groups, the native speakers and the ELLs—to get all learners up to the important milestone of GLE 4 in word reading.

Why is GLE 4 an important threshold? By GLE 4 nearly all the most common English spelling and syllable patterns have been learned. Someone who can read GLE 4 words is generally equipped with the skills to decode most of the syllable patterns they will encounter at higher levels of reading (Chall, 1983). They are able to use their knowledge of common syllable patterns to tackle multi-syllable words, providing they have learned how to syllabicate long words.

Therefore, teachers of Level B learners have the all-important job of helping learners to acquire enough basic phonics and knowledge of syllable types to become independent at decoding unfamiliar words for the rest of their lives.

Both profiles of Level B learners require structured language approaches (SLAs) for alphabets. The primary difference between the two profiles is that the reading disabled native speakers usually need more repetition and practice than the ELLs with new phonics patterns and sight words.

A note of caution: ELLs (most of whom are not reading disabled) may not understand the struggles of the native speakers, and they may become impatient at the slow pace and the amount of repetition those learners require. If this tension develops, the two profiles can be grouped separately for Alphabets instruction, with one group able to move faster than the other.

As for instructional materials, Sylvia Greene's Basic Literacy Kit II (Greene, 1996) picks up the phonics sequence where Kit I leaves off. It also includes a controlled basal reader that continues the story of Sam and Val while incorporating the additional phonics patterns.

Important note about phonics skills:

Unlike normally developing second-grade children, Level B adult learners tend to have uneven knowledge of phonics, sometimes with surprising gaps at lower levels of phonics and strengths at higher levels.

When it comes to alphabets for Level B learners, teachers should use diagnostic tests like Sylvia Greene's *Informal Word Analysis Inventory* (IWAI), the proprietary placement tests that come with commercial SLAs, or published tests like the *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading* (DAR). These tests are the only way to figure out which phonics principles learners have mastered, which need to be reviewed, and which need to be taught for the first time. (For more on this, see the section that follows, [Assessment for Level B Learners.](#))

FLUENCY

For every 15 minutes spent on direct instruction in alphabets (phonics and decoding), at least 30 minutes should be spent on oral reading of meaningful texts. Greene's *Sam and Val* controlled basal reader from her Basic Literacy Kit II (Greene, 1996) begins at approximately GLE 2, so it is an appropriate starting point for Level B learners' fluency instruction. As they become more skillful, they can move on to readings from a variety of sources that are not controlled. But it is critical that teachers verify the readability of every text they plan to introduce - not by guessing, but by using one of the free online readability formulas.⁴

As with Level A readers, Level B fluency instruction should emphasize accuracy and expression rather than rate. Some proven approaches to fluency instruction include repeated reading, round-robin reading, and "pop-corn reading." For more on the goals and approaches to teaching fluency, see the SABES EBRI course on Fluency.

VOCABULARY

GLE 2-3.9 Level B native speakers of English will not encounter very many words in print whose meanings they don't already know. Vocabulary instruction will involve words and concepts that occur in materials above GLE 4, such as texts that are read to them or videos and podcasts in content areas. Some of the techniques for teaching Tier 2 words in GLE 4-8 STAR classes can be used in oral discussions with Level B learners. Level B is

⁴ <https://www.textcompare.org/readability/> offers all of the major readability formulas, with concise explanations of how to use them. Many teachers find the Dale-Chall formula especially useful. [SABES](#) offers courses that include how to determine readability, how to use it for instruction, how to carry out qualitative evaluations of texts, and how to perform a "reader-and-task" evaluation of a text.

also an appropriate level to begin introducing some of the Signal Words (Kress & Fry, 2016) that are more common in print than in spoken language (e.g., *however*, *nevertheless*).

The situation is somewhat different for ELLs in Level B classes. Occasionally they may not know the meanings of surprisingly basic words in GLE 2-3.9 oral reading texts, especially words that occur in home and family contexts. That is because some ELLs have acquired much of their more advanced English vocabulary at work and via the outside world. But they use their native language for at home with family and friends, so they may not know the English words for household objects or activities. During oral reading teachers should ask occasional check-in questions of ELLs to make sure they understand key words and idioms which are highly familiar to native speakers but may be puzzling to ELLs.

Assessment priorities for Level B learners

Although the MAPT's scale range extends down to Level B, a comprehension assessment such as the MAPT does not reveal a learner's strengths and needs in reading. Only individual diagnostic reading assessments can provide this information.⁵

ALPHABETICS

Unlike entering 2nd grade children, almost all of whom begin the year with almost first-to-second grade decoding skills, Level B adult readers arrive with mixed patterns of phonics knowledge. Therefore, to inform and plan instruction for Level B learners, teachers need to know the details which letter sounds and phonics principles learners have mastered, which need to be reviewed, and which will need to be taught from scratch.

The only way to get this information is to administer a one-on-one test of phonics (aka word analysis). Structured language approaches such as Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, Lindamood-Bell, or Reading Horizons all include proprietary phonics placement tests.

⁵ The NCSALL article "What silent reading tests alone can't tell you: Two case studies in adult reading differences" (<http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=456.html>) highlights the different instructional needs of learners with contrasting profiles. Both readers have GLE 4 silent comprehension, but one needs to improve decoding and the other needs improve vocabulary.

Sylvia Greene's *Informal Word Analysis Inventory* (IWAI) (1996) tracks the phonics progression that is used by most structured language approaches. Another excellent alternative is the *DAR-2 Word Analysis* (Chall, et al., 2011) subtest, which provides a wide range of information including phonemic awareness, basic letter naming, basic phonics, and advanced phonics up through the syllabication and pronunciation of multi-syllable words.

WORD READING

Word reading (reading words in isolation) is assessed by using graded word lists such as those on the *Quick Adult Reading Inventory* (QARI) (Chall & Strucker) or the *DAR-2 Word Recognition subtest*.

FLUENCY

Fluency is a major instructional goal for Level B learners, so it is important to assess their fluency on entry and then to assess later to determine when they are ready to move up to Level C. The best fluency assessment for adults is the *DAR-2 Oral Reading subtest* (Chall, et al, 2011). The *Bader Reading and Language Inventory* (Bader, 1998) also includes graded oral reading passages, and is much less expensive than the DAR-2. But both tests' GLE 1-3 passages are written with children in mind.

Another approach would be to use passages from the *Challenger* adult series by New Readers Press (Murphy, 1985). The Challenger series includes graded passages at each level. But the series was intended for classroom instruction not assessment, so there is some variation in the difficulty of the passages within a given level. This means they can't be used to determine a learner's Grade Level Equivalent (GLE), but teachers can use them to make general observations about how well a learner reads texts at various levels.

When assessing word reading and fluency, the details of specific miscues are more important for teaching purposes than simply recording the GLE mastery levels. Is there a pattern to the learner's miscues, e.g., certain short vowels and not others? Silent *-e* words? Words beginning with blends like */tr-/* or digraphs like */ch-/*? Endings like *-ed* or *-ing*? Are the decoding miscues related to the problem areas in the phonics test? What decoding strategies does the learner use? Does she try to sound them out, or make guesses based on the first letter or the general appearance of the word

VOCABULARY

ACLS guidelines⁶ call for assessing Level B learners in Alphabets and Fluency only, but it is good practice to assess their oral vocabulary (word meaning). This is especially true with regard to the CCRSAE. In a change from previous adult ELA standards, the CCRSAE emphasize developing vocabulary and language for all learners, even those in Level A and Level B.

The best assessments are expressive oral vocabulary tests such as the *Davidson-Bruce Word Meaning Test* (Davidson & Bruce, 2000) or the *DAR-2 Word Meaning test* (Chall, et al, 2011). They are called expressive vocabulary tests because the student tells what he knows about the meaning of the target word in his own words, and the teacher records the learner's answers verbatim. Expressive vocabulary tests reveal not only the learner's vocabulary GLE level (vocabulary breadth), but how thoroughly and precisely he understands the words he knows (vocabulary depth). Depth of vocabulary knowledge is an important contributor to reading comprehension.

| [Return to the Introduction](#) |

⁶ "Guidance for Providing Evidence-based Reading Instruction (EBRI), a Requirement of WIOA" at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/rfp/star.html>

Strucker, 2020 * <https://www.sabes.org/pd-center/ela>

DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CCRSAE—THE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS FOR ADULT EDUCATION

- [How were the CCRSAE developed?](#)
- [CCRSAE Levels of Adult Reading](#)
- [How the CCRSAE are Organized and Presented](#)

How were the CCRSAE developed?

The CCRSAE grew directly out of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 education,

“...[which are] the result of a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop education standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and Mathematics for voluntary state adoption. The CCSS differ in one noteworthy respect from earlier state standards efforts: the CCSS are anchored by empirical evidence of what employers and educators actually demand of prospective employees and students. Indeed, standards were selected only when the best available evidence indicated that their mastery was needed for college and career readiness.” (NGA 2010b, 2010c, pp. 91–93, cited in Pimentel, 2013).

The CCRSAE are also “...anchored in what employers and educators demand of prospective employees and students.” And, like the Common Core, the CCRSAE call for reading instruction to focus on three key areas thought to support those demands (Pimentel, 2013):

- ❖ **Complexity:** Regular practice with complex text and its academic language
- ❖ **Evidence:** Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational
- ❖ **Knowledge:** Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

As their title states, the CCRSAE are standards, not a curriculum or a set of recommendations for best teaching approaches. This *Teacher's Guide to the CCRSAE for Level A and Level B Adult Learners* is meant to fill in the gap between standards and what we know about the best teaching approaches and materials for helping learners achieve the standards.

At first glance, the CCRSAE seem like an impossibly long and daunting set of recommendations. However, this *Teacher's Guide* will highlight the considerable overlapping and repetition among the standards. Because so many of the CCRSAE overlap and support each other, it is often possible for one instructional activity or set of classroom practices to contribute simultaneously to two or more standards. Instances of where this may be possible are noted in the **Comment** section following each anchor standard.

CCRS AE Levels of Adult Reading

The CCRSAE are organized into six levels: A (K–1), B (GLE 2–3), C (GLE 4–5), D (GLE 6–8), and E (GLE 9–12). These levels correspond to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) adult education levels: Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy GLE 0-1.9, Beginning Basic Education GLE 2-3.9, Low Intermediate Basic Education GLE 4-5.9, High Intermediate Basic Education GLE 6-7.9, Low Adult Secondary GLE 8-9.9, and High Adult Secondary Education GLE 10-11.9.

Perhaps because CCRSAE levels are imported from the K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the CCRSAE levels are represented as grade level equivalents (GLE) based on full years of children's schooling. In contrast, OCTAE's levels represent grade level equivalent spans based on test scores that are used to place adult learners in the appropriate levels of adult education. Therefore, when CCRSAE refers to Level A (OCTAE's Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy) as GLE K-1, this covers the same span as OCTAE's designation GLE 0-1.9. OCTAE's GLE 1.9 translates to the end of the CCRSAE GLE 1. Similarly, CCRSAE Level B, designated as GLE 2-3, covers the whole of grades 2 and 3. OCTAE's GLE 3.9 would represent the end of CCRSAE GLE 3.

To add to the confusion, the notation following each CCRSAE standard shows where in the CCSS they are copied from. "The citation at the end of each standard... identifies the CCSS strand, grade, and number (or standard number and letter, where applicable). For example, RI.4.3 stands for Reading, Informational Text, Grade 4, Standard 3." (Pimentel, 2013, p.13) So the origins of CCRSAE Reading Standard Anchor 1, "Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (RI/RL.1.1)" are Reading Informational Text and Reading Literature, Grade 1, Standard 1 from the Common Core State Standards.

For the sake of clarity, this document will use the OCTAE designations because most adult educators are more familiar with them. Level A will be referred to as GLE 0-1.9 and Level B as GLE 2-3.9.

How the CCRSAE are Organized and Presented

The CCRSAE are organized into four strands: *Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening*, and *Language*. Each strand is made up of six to ten "anchors" that are the actual standards. The anchors define the standards in fairly general terms, but underneath each anchor, specific competencies or skills are listed for each level of adult education, from Level A through Level E. (For more details on the organization of the CCRSAE, see Pimentel, 2013, pp. 11-13.)

This *Teacher's Guide* treats the GLE 0-1.9 and GLE 2-3.9 learners as two distinct groups based on their strengths and needs in reading. GLE 0-1.9 learners are acquiring the basic decoding skills, while GLE 2.3.9 have acquired most of the basic decoding skills. However, in addition to acquiring the remaining decoding skills, GLE 2-3.9 learners are engaged in the critical task of becoming fluent readers.

As noted above, the CCRSAE are primarily focused on the *reading of complex texts*, *evaluating evidence in reading/employing evidence in writing and speaking*, and *building knowledge through the reading of content-rich texts*. These areas are completely dependent on the ability to decode print accurately and fluently. Yet, by definition, GLE 0-1.9 and 2-3.9 learners are just learning to be accurate and fluent at decoding. In recognition of this, the CCRSAE enumerates a set of Foundational Skills for GLE 0-5 learners. Adult educators will recognize these foundational skills as *alphabetic*s and *fluency*.

| [Return to the Introduction](#) |

ANNOTATED CCRSAE FOR LEVEL A, LEVEL B, AND READING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Throughout this next section, each anchor standard or reading foundational skill is followed by a “**Comment**” by the author of this document. These comments are not part of the CCRSAE. Sometimes they represent the author’s opinion on the relevance and appropriateness of a given standards. Whenever possible, they suggest instructional activities and materials that might be used to implement the standard.

[CCRSAE for Level A Learners \(GLE 0-1.9\):](#)

[Reading Foundational Skills](#)
[Reading Standards](#)
[Writing Standards](#)
[Speaking and Listening Standards](#)
[Language Standards](#)

[CCRSAE for Level B Learners \(GLE 2-3.9\):](#)

[Reading Foundational Skills](#)
[Reading Standards](#)
[Writing Standards](#)
[Speaking and Listening Standards](#)
[Language Standards](#)

CCRSAE for Level A Learners (GLE 0-1.9)

Reading Foundational Skills for Level A

“The Reading Standards: Foundational Skills are directed toward fostering students’ understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system. These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines.” (Pimentel, 2013. p. 40)

RF.2.7 Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). (Phonological Awareness)

- a. Recognize and produce rhyming words.
- b. Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.
- c. Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.
- d. Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single syllable spoken words.
- e. Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.
- f. Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).
- g. Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.
- h. Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words. (RF.K.2 and 1.2 merge)

Comment: The above list conflates *phonemic awareness* and *phonological awareness* skills. Points f, g, and h fall into the phonemic awareness category. Phonemic awareness refers to skills in distinguishing and manipulating individual speech sounds (phonemes). Because of the prevalence of moderate-to-severe reading disability among Level A learners, phoneme-level tasks are extremely challenging, to the point that most learners will be unable to master them. (See the previous discussions of "[core phonological deficit](#).") Although phonemic awareness may never be mastered, it is still helpful to work briefly on some of these skills with Level A adults (Kruidenier, McShane, & Davidson, 2012). However, teachers should not withhold teaching the more accessible skills of phonological awareness and phonics until phonemic awareness is mastered, because that may never happen.

Phonological awareness deals with larger chunks of speech sounds—syllables and words. Points a – e fall into this category. Again, because of their core phonological deficit, GLE 0-1.9 adults also find some syllable-level tasks difficult to master. But they tend to have much greater success at this level than at the phoneme level.⁸ In addition, phonological skills and activities lead naturally into and prepare learners for *phonics*, the rules and patterns of how the sounds of English map onto the letter symbols.

⁷ Even though RF.2 is the first foundational reading skill in the CCRSAE, it is taken intact from the Common Core State Standards where it is the second foundational reading skill, hence the "2".

⁸ See Adams, 1990 for an explanation of why phonological awareness is less challenging for beginning readers than phonemic awareness.

Important point:

Because the Massachusetts Proficiency Test (MAPT) does not cover Level A, TABE 11-12 L been mandated for GLE 0-1.9 learners. However, like any other standardized test, the TABE L should not be used as a guide for what to teach.

This is especially true when it comes to phonemic awareness (PA): although 25% of the items on the TABE L are focused on PA, teachers should definitely not take up 25% of class time with PA, nor should they attempt to reproduce some of the PA tasks that appear on the TABE L.

Instead, it is recommended that teachers follow the PA activities that embedded in whatever SLA they are using. Instructional time that could be fruitfully employed on phonics, sight word reading, and oral reading fluency should not be wasted teaching to the TABE L PA items.

RF.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. (Phonics and Word Recognition)

- a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter/sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.
- b. Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.
- c. Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.
- d. Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- e. Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.
- f. Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
- g. Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
- h. Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
- i. Read words with inflectional endings.
- j. Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).
- k. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words. (RF.K.3 and 1.3 merge)

Comment: RF.3 lists the basic phonics (aka word analysis) skills taught in 0-1.9 reading in virtually the same sequence as most of the structured language approaches [discussed earlier](#). But some of the “high-frequency words” need to be taught earlier in the sequence so that learners can begin to read simple stories in a controlled basal reader and other texts. (See also the [SABES](#) EBRI course by Sylvia Greene, *Alphabetics*.)

The “grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words” referred to in point k. can be found on the Dolch Word List (2020) or the “Instant Words” in *The Reading Teacher’s Book of Lists* (Kress & Fry, 2016).

RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. **(Fluency)**

- a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary. (RF.K.4 and 1.4 merge)

Comment: Fluency is critical for reading comprehension, especially when learners reach higher Levels B, C, D, and E. Fluent readers, by definition, are able to decode effortlessly—so effortlessly that they are unaware of the decoding process. They are free to devote all of their mental energy into understanding, reflecting on, and interacting with the text.

Fluency plays a different but equally critical role with beginning readers. Oral reading of accessible, meaningful texts such as controlled basal readers is the best way for them to cement and build upon the phonics principles they are learning. Repeated reading should be used to achieve accuracy, smoothness, and expression. Recent research (Ashby, 2016) emphasizes the key contribution of expression or prosody to comprehension for readers at all levels. (See the [SABES](#) EBRI courses on Alphabetics and Fluency for suggestions and techniques for practicing oral reading with GLE 0-1.9 readers.)

Point c, “*Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary,*” should come with some qualifications. Many Level A adults appear to read a little, especially if the topic is familiar. They “read” by guessing at the

pronunciation of a word based on its context or its context and/or its first letter. We want them to decode using phonics—by looking at the whole word and blending its letter sounds, not by guessing based on the context or first letter.

Of course, books for beginning readers tend to be “pattern predictable,” in that there is much repetition, and they feature simple stories that allow readers to confirm their decoding based on straightforward expectations about the text. Nevertheless, Point c. should not be interpreted to mean that we should encourage learners how to make context guesses. To be concrete, when a learner is unable to decode a word in text, we should just supply it, not ask him to guess its pronunciation based on the story. On the other hand, if a learner misreads a word, we might occasionally ask him whether his reading of the word makes sense. So, if a learner reads, “Sam has a *car*. Its name is Fluffy,” we would usually just supply the correction *cat* for *car*, but once in a while, we might say, “A car named Fluffy? Does that make sense?”

Important point:

The amount of space devoted to the various topics in CCRSAE below is emphatically not an indication of the proportion of instructional time that should be devoted to the topics.

Specifically, while the CCRSAE pertaining to Reading Foundational Skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and fluency) occupy less than one-third of the entire CCRSAE, alphabetic instruction should normally occupy at least two-thirds of their instructional time.

That is, about two-thirds of Level A learners’ class time should be spent on letter/sound relationships, word analysis, sight word practice, oral reading of texts for fluency and accuracy, and writing and spelling the words they are learning to read. The remaining one-third of instructional time should be used to work on vocabulary and comprehension strategies for informational and literary texts.

However, because Level A and B adults’ decoding ability is severely limited, many of the CCRSAE for comprehension can best be addressed via oral language activities and through the discussion of informational and literary texts that are read to the learners.

CCRS AE Reading Standards for Level A Learners (GLE 0-1.9)

The CCRSAE emphasize that Level 0-1.9 learners' instructional needs in reading go beyond the Foundational Skills (alphabets) discussed above. These Reading Standards, referred to as "Anchors," extend from Level A (GLE 0-1.9) up to Level E (GLE 9-12).

The CCRSAE list nine reading anchors for GLE 0-1.9 learners. Comments following each anchor suggest how they might be implemented for learners at Level A.

Two factors constrain how many of the nine reading anchors teachers can cover for 0-1.9 learners.⁹ First, ELA instructional time for 0-1.9 learners is usually limited to three to five hours per week, and, second, of that three to five hours, approximately two thirds should be spent on Foundational Skills (alphabets). This means teachers will need to choose which anchors they deem most important and create activities which combine the skills and competencies from several anchors. In any teaching, it is usually wiser to work on fewer areas in depth than to skim the surface of many.

CCR Reading Anchor 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Level A: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (RI/RL.1.1)

Comment: The texts that 0-1.9 learners are able to read have been designed with the primary goal of supporting and reinforcing the decoding principles they are learning in the phonics (word analysis) part of their lesson. The stories are kept deliberately simple and predictable, so they may not contain very many "key details."

Instead, learners can be asked key details of texts that are read to them by the teacher, or key details of videos or podcasts that they listen to.

CCR Reading Anchor 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

Level A: Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text. (RI.1.2)

⁹ And, this doesn't count additional anchors for Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

Comment: Similar to the previous Anchor 1, this standard could best be covered by reading texts (or via videos and podcasts) to learners that they ordinarily wouldn't be able to decode themselves.

CCR Reading Anchor 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

Level A: Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text. (RI.1.3)

Comment: Same as above for RI.1.2.

CCR Reading Anchor 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Level A: Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text. (RI.1.4)

Comment: Similar to above, teachers could model this by asking about the meanings of a few words in a text that was read to learners, then learners could be encouraged to ask their own questions about words.

CCR Reading Anchor 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Level A: Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text. (RI.1.5)

Comment: This would be very challenging for learners with extremely limited decoding ability, except perhaps on a very basic level such as recognizing and using smart phone or computer icons.

CCR Reading Anchor 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Level A: ___

Comment: The CCRSAE listed no application for Anchor 6 for GLE 0-1.9 learners, presumably because this can only be done with a printed text that the reader can decode and understand.

CCR Reading Anchor 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Level A: Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas (e.g., maps, charts, photographs, political cartoons, etc.). (RI.1.7)

Comment: This might involve encouraging learners to describe how an illustration or photograph in a basic text they are reading relates to the story or topic.

CCR Reading Anchor 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Level A: Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text. (RI.1.8)

Comment: This would appear to call for substantial support from the teacher by helping students recall arguments in a text read to them, then guiding them through a discussion of the "sufficiency of the evidence."

Teachers might need to backtrack to discuss what is meant by "evidence," which would also be a worthwhile topic for discussion for building vocabulary.

CCR Reading Anchor 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Level A: Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Comment: As written, this Anchor seems very challenging for learners who can't independently read texts and thus would be unable to compare any texts side-by-side.

CCRS AE Writing Standards for Level A Learners (GLE 0-1.9)

The CCRSAE list six writing standards for GLE 0-1.9 learners; the “comments” offer suggestions as to how these standards might be implemented for learners at this level. There is no Level A for standards 1, 4, and 9.

CCR Writing Anchor 2: Write informative/ explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Level A: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure. (W.1.2)

Comment: This could take the form of a language experience activity in which the learners dictate their ideas to the teacher who transcribes them onto a white board or smart board. How-to pieces might work, such as how to change a tire, bake a cake, or operate a smart phone—all of which involve sequencing and clarity. Later some learners might be able to write short informative texts with support from the teacher.

CCR Writing Anchor 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Level A: Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure. (W.1.3)

Comment: The instructional approach might be similar to the previous anchor. In this case, the teacher could take dictation based on family stories, funny things kids do, an event at work, etc.

CCR Writing Anchor 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Level A: With guidance and support, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed. (W.1.5)

Comment: This could happen as a group activity during the transcribing phase of the above activities. A learner dictates a sentence, the teacher transcribes it, then asks the class for suggestions on how to make it clearer, or more interesting, funnier, etc.

CCR Writing Anchor 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Level A: With guidance and support, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. (W.1.6)

Comment: It's possible that some learners are already doing some texting, either by typing or using the speech-to-text feature of their smart phones. Those who haven't attempted this yet could be introduced to it. If email and internet are available in the classroom, learners could write to each other, beginning with writing and responding to short formulaic messages ("Hi Bob, How are you?"). This would introduce how to operate a laptop, use a keyboard, get online, etc.

CCR Writing Anchor 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Level A: Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of "how-to" books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions). (W.1.7)

Comment: This would appear to be very challenging for 0-1.9 learners. It is doubtful they would independently be able to read the how-to books they are expected to "explore." Writing a "sequence of instructions" is likely to be possible only with the teacher's transcription of the learners' ideas, as above in CCR Anchor 2.

CCR Writing Anchor 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Level A: With guidance and support, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (W.1.8)

Comment: It isn't clear how the activity suggested could actually play-out for 0-1.9 learners. What kind of a question would the learners take on? Does "provided sources" refer to materials that are read to the learners? On the whole, Anchor 8 appears to be more appropriate for learners at higher levels of reading and writing.

CCRS AE Speaking and Listening Standards for Level A Learners (GLE 0-1.9)

"...[they] require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills. The standards ask students to learn to work together, express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, evaluate what they hear, use media and visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task."

The CCRSAE list five speaking and listening anchors for GLE 0-1.9 learners; there is no Level A for standard 5. The comments offer suggestions as to how they each might be implemented for learners at this level.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Level A: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners in small and larger groups.

- a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- b. Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
- c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion. (SL.1.1)

Comment: Given time constraints in ABE classes, these kinds of discussions should be brief (say five minutes per class) and gently guided by teachers.

Sometimes the best way to offer guidance is by highlighting positive examples of participation, such as,

"Anne, I really liked the way your comment built on what Frank said."

"Sam, you expressed your disagreement with Ed clearly and politely."

"You raised an important question, Ginnie, and, Annette, you addressed Ginnie's question very thoroughly."

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Level A: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. (SL.K.2)

Comment: This is the kind of discussion that teachers routinely carry out.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Level A: Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. (SL.K.3)

Comment: This activity could be based on listening to a podcast or watching a video. For 0-1.9 learners, it might overlap with Reading Anchor 8, which would also involve getting information from a video, podcast, or text that is read to them.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Level A: Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly. (SL.1.4)

Comment: Perhaps once a week for five minutes a different learner could give a brief oral presentation on a topic of their choice—their hobbies, favorite music, cooking, home repair, sports, etc. Teachers should model the activity, then provide some guidance to help each learner prepare their presentation.

[No Anchor 5 standard for GLE 0-1.9 learners.]

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Level A: Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. (SL.K.6)
Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation. (See Language standards 1 and 3.) (SL.1.6)

Comment: This anchor clearly relates to college and career readiness. As a way of introducing it, teachers could discuss with the class the different *registers* we all use in oral communication—how we might talk to supervisors at work vs. how we talk to family and friends; how we might talk to our doctor or kid's teacher vs. how we might talk with family and friends; how we might talk with customers at work, how we talk with co-workers, etc.

Some of the issues to consider include clarity of expression, brevity, politeness, and how much personal information we share. It's not that one register is "right" and the other is "wrong"—it's all about appropriateness. An additional topic might be the sub-topic of phone etiquette—both when making calls and answering them.

CCRS AE Language Standards for Level A Learners (GLE 0-1.9)

As discussed above under [Foundational Skills](#), many of the Language Standards address vocabulary, an essential component of instruction for 0-1.9 learners.

The CCRSAE describe the Language Standards as follows (the emphasis is mine):

...[they] include the essential "rules" of standard written and spoken English, but they also approach language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives. *The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases and their nuances and relationships, and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.* Students advancing through the levels are expected to meet each level's specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understanding mastered in preceding levels. (Pimentel, 2013, p, 33. Emphasis mine.)

The CCRSAE list five language anchors for GLE 0-1.9 learners. Comments are offered as to how they might be implemented for learners at this level.

CCR Language Anchor 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Level A: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- a. Print all upper- and lowercase letters.
- b. Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.
- c. Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).
- d. Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their; anyone, everything).
- e. Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home).
- f. Use frequently occurring adjectives.
- g. Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
- h. Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or, so, because).
- i. Use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives).
- j. Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., during, beyond, toward).
- k. Understand and use question words (interrogatives) (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how).
- l. Produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts. (L.K.1 and 1.1 merge)

Comment: Clearly, item a. (printing the upper- and lower-case letters) would most likely be covered during writing instruction.

Points b. through e., dealing with English usage around tenses, subject/verb agreement, and possessives, really focus on the difference between so-called standard English and the everyday speech of many English speakers, including some African Americans and Jamaicans, as well as many other English speakers from the Caribbean and West Africa.

The "conventions of standard English" should be addressed tactfully with all adults, without disparaging learners' everyday speech. This could be done in the context of the discussion referred to above under Speaking and Listening of the different registers people use – the informal registers we use with family and friends and the more formal

registers we use at work and in the larger society. Many African Americans and Jamaicans, as well as other English speakers from the Caribbean and West Africa are adept at “code-switching” from informal registers to more formal.

The point is not to speak one way or another all the time, but to be able to use the appropriate register for each situation. The ability to code-switch is a great gift—almost like being bilingual. Writers such as Langston Hughes and orators such as Rev. Jesse Jackson use code-switching very effectively.

It can also be emphasized to learners that when we write (distance communication), we try to use standard English for reasons of clarity.

CCR Language Anchor 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Level A: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- a. Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun I.
- b. Capitalize dates and names of people.
- c. Recognize and name end punctuation.
- d. Use end punctuation for sentences.
- e. Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.
- f. Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short vowel sounds (phonemes).
- g. Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships.
- h. Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words.
- i. Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions. (L.K.2 and 1.2 merge)

Comment: Points a. through d. are likely to be taught in writing instruction in the context of meaningful writing of notes, messages, emails and texts. Some learners may be use the informal spelling used in text messages, so it would be important to discuss this as an issue of both register and clarity.

Points f. and g., dealing with letter-sound correspondence and phonetic spelling, take place in Reading Fundamentals instruction.

[CCR Anchor 3 is not applicable to GLE 0-1.9 learners.]

CCR Language Anchor 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Level A: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

- a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- b. Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
- c. Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking). (L.1.4)

Comment: Teachers should be careful not to over-emphasize using context (especially within a single sentence!) for determining meaning. Research has shown that there is seldom sufficient context for determining the meanings most words in texts, even in much richer texts and at much higher levels than 0.1.9 (See Nagy in McKeown & Curtis, eds., 1987).

There is also the danger that beginning adult readers may confuse using context to guess at *meanings* with using context to guess at *decoding*. The latter approach conflicts directly with the alphabetic decoding strategies which are at center of Reading Foundations for 0-1.9 adults.

CCR Language Anchor 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings

Level A: With guidance and support, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- b. Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
- c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
- d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings. (L.1.5)

Comment: Categorizing (a.) is a way to build a deeper understanding of known words. Activities like key attributes, or shades of meaning could be a five-minute oral activity that is part of a vocabulary lesson.

CCR Language Anchor 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Level A: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., because). (L.1.6)

Comment: This is an important focus for 0-1.9 learners. Although academic (aka Tier 2) words are an important part of the STAR GLE 4-8 curriculum, teachers can introduce academic words orally during virtually all formal and informal classroom interactions, especially via questions. For example,

*"Theresa, can you give us some **specific** reasons why you like soccer?"*

*"Charles, what is your **perspective** on raising the **minimum** wage?"*

(For more on how to teach Tier 2 academic words, see Zwiers & Crawford, 2011 and Beck & McKeown, 2002.)

CCRS AE for Level B (GLE 2-3.9) Learners

Reading Foundational Skills

RF.2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). (Phonological Awareness)

- [Phonological awareness is a Level A skill only.]

Comment: Although phonological awareness does not appear among Level B skills, this does not mean that most Level B learners have mastered phonological awareness (PA), or even that they are likely to do so. Research on adult disabled readers (e.g., Bruck, 1992; Blachman, 1994) has shown that even after formerly reading disabled adults become competent readers, they usually struggle with this foundational skill. Therefore, it is not worth it to spend too much time on PA with Level B learners.

RF.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. (Phonics and Word Recognition)

- a. Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- b. Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.
- c. Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes.
- d. Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.
- e. Decode words with common Latin suffixes.
- f. Decode multisyllable words.
- g. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words. (RF.2.3 and 3.3 merge)

Comment: This list of the phonics skills and word/syllable types is appropriate for GLE 2-3.9 learners, but it is too general to be used as a guide for instruction. Moreover, it is a list, not a chronological or instructional sequence. For example, "f.) decode multisyllable words," would only occur at the end of the phonics sequence or only as learners' skills begin to approach GLE 3.9. Multisyllable words can and should be taught throughout the sequence as part of each word family. For example, in teaching -aw sound/spelling pattern, after learners have begun to master one-syllable examples like jaw, law, paw, raw, and saw, claw, and draw, you might also introduce two-syllable words like awful, lawful, awesome, or awkward.

Important point:

Teachers should always work from the sequence of phonics skills embedded in whatever structured language approach they are using, e.g., Orton-Gillingham, Wilson, Reading Horizons, etc. Level B learners can be located where they are on the sequence by diagnostic testing to show which phonics skills they have mastered and which they will need to review or learn.

A final reminder: experienced teachers know that at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of a semester, it is a good idea to review the Level A phonics sequence, especially for those Level B students who have a history of reading disability. And, to underline the importance of diagnostic assessment, it is critical to have accurate and specific information on each learner's phonics and word recognition needs. Teachers should use Sylvia Greene's *Informal Word Analysis Inventory* (Greene, 1996) or the *DAR-2 Word Analysis* subtest (Chall, et al., 2005) to identify learners' needs in phonics; and the *DAR-2 Word Reading* (Chall, et al., 2005) or *QARI Word Reading* (Chall & Strucker, 1999) to identify patterns of words that they struggle with, such as words ending in *-ion*, words containing *-ight*, or vowel digraphs like *-ow* or *-ou*.

RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
(Fluency)

- a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
- b. Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary. (RF.2.4 and 3.4 merge)

Comment: As mentioned above, accuracy and fluency in oral reading of meaningful texts are the primary goals of reading instruction for GLE 2-3.9 learners. At this stage of reading development (Chall, 1983,) readers are in the process of becoming fluent or "unglued from print," They must become fluent and automatic at decoding so that most

of their mental energy is available to read for meaning and to reflect and raise questions about the texts – in short, to become active readers.

Fluency is a must for GLE 2-3.9 learners because starting at GLE 4 and above, texts become more challenging and complex – they contain more information, use more literate vocabulary, and employ longer sentences. Prior to GLE 4, when Level A and B adults are “learning to read,” teachers use controlled basal readers and simple texts on familiar topics so that learners can focus on smooth, accurate, automatic decoding. In contrast, from GLE 4 onward readers are expected to use printed texts to gain new information. This stage of reading development is called “reading to learn.” Without mastering accurate, fluent, and automatic decoding – i.e., fluency - reading to learn is impossible.

Important point:

Fluency is the top priority for Level B learners. As much as 30 minutes per class should be devoted to guided oral reading, as well as for practicing expression (prosody) through repeated oral reading. (The SABES online EBRI course “Fluency for adult readers 0-3.9” covers teaching techniques and how to select appropriate texts for oral reading.)

For fluency instruction to be effective, teachers need to assess the oral reading levels of their learners so they can provide them with oral reading texts at an appropriate level of challenge. (For more on this, see the SABES online EBRI course “Diagnostic Assessment of Reading,” which covers how to determine learners’ levels of word reading and oral reading.)

“Expression” (aka prosody) is mentioned third after accuracy and appropriate rate as component of fluency. But, as recent research has shown (Ashby, et al, 2016), reading with expression is a major contributor and aid to comprehension. Even when good readers read silently, they impart expression to the text they are reading (Adams, 1990). The goal of oral reading instruction is for 2-3.9 learners to be able to make the printed texts sound like natural speech. Natural speech is delivered with the entire range of human expression and interpretation – including joy, anger, fear, worry, skepticism, and even subtler tones like irony or sarcasm.

As an aside, most adult learners read slower than normally developing children at equivalent GLEs (Strucker & Davidson, 2003), and their very slow reading can impair the comprehension of longer sentences and more complex texts. But it can be difficult for adult learners to increase their reading rates. Interestingly, many teachers have found that learners are more likely to improve their rate by concentrating on expression, rather than by concentrating directly on rate alone.

With regard to point c., "*Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary*":

Similar to the qualification above under fluency for GLE 0-1.9 learners, this standard emphatically does not mean that teachers should encourage or teach learners to use context as a decoding strategy. Most Level B learners haven't mastered phonetic decoding. Instead, they compensate by guessing about words from their context. This can work, albeit very imperfectly, in texts about highly familiar topics, but it is virtually useless for unfamiliar texts and topics. The goal of both Level A and Level B instruction is to get learners to rely on phonetic decoding rather than context guessing.

| [Return to the Introduction](#) |

Level B Reading Standards

CCR Reading Anchor 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (RI/RL.2.1)

Comment: Level B learners even at entry at GLE 2 are just beginning to be able to read texts that contain enough information for the above questions to be meaningful. Most of the time such texts will be read orally as part of guided oral reading, especially for GLE 2-3 readers. Time-honored comprehension techniques can be effective, such as asking learners, "Can you underline the sentence where it tells how old the Pyramids are?" As Level B learners get closer to GLE 3.9, they will be able to read more complex texts independently or with some support in science, social studies, and literature.

CCR Reading Anchor 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea. (RI.3.2)

Comment: Main idea and summarizing are the most important comprehension skills for Level B learners because they make the reader think and analyze text (Willingham, 2003). Main idea and summarizing can be practiced based via guided oral reading or from texts or podcasts learners listen to. The important thing is to include lots of discussion about not only what the main idea is but why it the main idea. Avoid using main idea workbooks and work sheets that use multiple-choice formats where the learner only needs to choose the "right" answer. It is much better to have learners express the main idea and summarize a text in their own words. This allows them to do their own thinking, just as good readers do when they are reading independently. Debate and group discussion can focus on the best phrasing of the main idea and the reasoning that went into determining it.

CCR Reading Anchor 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. (RI.3.3)

Comment: Sequencing events, concepts, or procedures can best be tackled when learners are able to refer to texts they've read. That is why the CCR implies that this activity might take place for learners at GLE 3, where texts with this level of complexity begin to be accessible. Simple sequencing could perhaps be tackled for below GLE 3 by reading or writing recipes or instructions.

CCR Reading Anchor 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a topic or subject area. (RI.3.4)

Comment: Like Anchor 3, Anchor 4 is suggested for learners at approximately GLE 3. To "[i]nterpret words and phrases..." learners need to refer to a text they've read and understood. Moreover, analysis of the meaning and tone of words in context is also a vocabulary skill. But before this skill can be developed, learners need to be encouraged to be curious about the meanings of unknown words, rather than skipping over them. This curiosity can be developed during pauses in guided oral reading when the teacher asks, "What do you think they mean by "*minimum* speed limit?" And, when English language learners ask the meanings of words—even easy words the native speakers already know—the teacher can complement them for asking, "I'm glad you asked what a garage is, Marie. Good readers always ask about words they aren't sure of."

CCR Reading Anchor 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently. (RI.2.5) Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently. (RI.3.5)

Comment: Teachers should consider which of these skills are accessible to their GLE 2-3.9 GLE learners, most of whom have limited word reading skills. Learning about some features of print (e.g., captions, bold print) makes sense, hyperlinks are more likely to occur in higher level electronic texts, and opening a hyperlink wouldn't be helpful to GLE 2-3.9 learners if the text that pops up is not decodable for them.

CCR Reading Anchor 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe. (RI.2.6) Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text. (RI.3.6)

Comment: "Identify the main purpose..." is an extension of the main idea and summarizing skills discussed above in Reading Anchor 2 above. "Distinguish their own point of view..." seems intertwined with identifying the main purpose and author's intent. In any case, teachers could tackle both through questions and discussion of guided oral reading or texts read to students.

CCR Reading Anchor 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outline by Standard 10.)

- Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). (RI.3.7) Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting). (RL.3.7)

Comment: It is assumed that CCR listed these skills at the GLE 3 level, since higher level texts are more apt to make use of maps, illustrations. But teachers shouldn't hesitate to

ask questions about illustrations in simpler GLE 2 texts, such as, "How does this picture show how the couple feel about each other?"

CCR Reading Anchor 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text. (RI.2.8)

Comment: Before teaching this skill from a text, teachers may want to back up to discuss orally in a familiar context what is meant by the terms claims and evidence.

CCR Reading Anchor 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (Apply this standard to texts of appropriate complexity as outlined by Standard 10.)

- Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic. (RI.3.9)

Comment: Anchor 9 is classified as a GLE 3 skill—and rightly so, given that it requires an understanding of an author's "approach," as well as the ability to read and develop a deep understanding of two texts.

CCR Reading Anchor 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Quantitative Measures of Text Complexity Associated with Levels of Learning B-E
(CCRS AE, pg. 21)

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power [®]	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework [®]
2nd – 3rd (B)	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820
4th – 5th (C)	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010
6th – 8th (D)	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185
9th – 10th (E)	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335
11th – CCR (E)	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385

See full size chart on the next page.

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power®	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework®
2nd – 3rd (B)	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820
4th – 5th (C)	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010
6th – 8th (D)	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185
9th – 10th (E)	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335
11th – CCR (E)	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385

Comment: The top two rows of this chart show various measures of text complexity for Level B. It is meant to be used as an aid to help teachers select text of appropriate complexity (readability) for Level B learners. For texts where the level of complexity is not specified by the publisher, teachers would need to enter samples of a text into the online calculator to determine its appropriateness. Here is a source for free online readability formulas: <https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-calculators.php>. Of these, the Dale-Chall formula is particularly helpful because it identifies which words in a text are less familiar.

Level B Writing Standards

CCR Writing Anchor 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
 - a. Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
 - b. Provide reasons that support the opinion.
 - c. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section. (W.3.1).

Comment: Given their level of reading and writing difficulties, Anchor 1 would be very challenging for GLE 2-3.9 adults without considerable support. This could take the form of a group exercise where the teacher transcribes sentences from the group or

individual learners. Alternatively, the teacher might supply a template for the essay, such as:

Paragraph 1: "The mayor of [our city] wants to rent electric scooters. I am [in favor of/against] electric scooters for three important reasons.

Paragraph 2: "First, [_____]. Second, [_____]. Third, [_____]."

Paragraph 3: "Therefore, the city [should/should not] rent electric scooters."

CCR Writing Anchor 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.
 - c. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section. (W.3.2)

Comment: See previous under Anchor 1.

CCR Writing Anchor 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

- Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure. (W.2.3)

Comment: Although the narrative called in Anchor 3 is less challenging than the previous anchors 1 and 2, it would require a similar level of support and commitment of class time. Helping learners write even a very simple narrative - *I woke up late this morning. I missed my bus. I got to work 10 minutes late. But my boss was late, too, so I didn't get in trouble* - might require talking and conferencing with each student several times. With limited ABE class hours, this activity might be undertaken only a few times a semester.

CCR Writing Anchor 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (W.3.4)

Comment: This seems too general to be of guidance. However, its aims are somewhat covered if learners are engaged in the writing activities in Anchors 1, 2, or 3.

CCR Writing Anchor 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

- With guidance and support from peers and others, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 at this level.) (W.3.5)

Comment: This seems like a general approach to having students share and comment on their writing. It's not clear what is meant by "others."

CCR Writing Anchor 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

- With guidance and support, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others. (W.3.6)

Comment: Assuming laptops or desktops are available, keyboarding skills are important for Level B, and they could be introduced earlier than GLE 3. "Publishing" might be something as simple as a class booklet of stories, poems, and essays.

CCR Writing Anchor 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

- Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic. (W.3.7)

Comment: Anchor 7 seems like a challenge given the limitations on instructional time for Level B learners. "Research" would involve access to a library and instruction on how to access materials and/or access to the internet, how to conduct searches, and how to evaluate the results of the searches.

From a reading development standpoint, some of Anchor 7's activities are within reach of Level B learners as they approach GLE 3.9, but it would require a substantial commitment of time that would be better employed in other areas.

CCR Writing Anchor 8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

- Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories. (W.3.8)

Comment: Most of the activities and skills in Anchor 8 seem to fit within Anchor 7. And, like Anchor 7, they could be difficult to carry out in the limited instructional time available in ABE.

Level B Speaking & Listening Standards

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
 - b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
 - c. Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.

- d. Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion. (SL.3.1)

Comment: Anchor 1 places CCR value on the skills and activities that should be part of all classroom discussions.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

- Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.3.2)

Comment: This overlaps directly with and could be combined with Reading Anchor 2. Teachers might practice main idea and supporting details with materials read to learners or presented via “diverse media” before extending those skills to materials are able to read themselves.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

- Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail. (SL.3.3)

Comment: This is likely to take place in the course of regular whole-class or small group discussions. The teacher can model the kinds of questions that might be asked of a speaker. These kinds of questions are sometimes referred to as “text dependent” or “text analytic”, and they help to encourage reading for understanding.

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace. (SL.3.4)

Comment: This is an activity that could be used as a warmup at the beginning of each class where learners might take turns making brief oral presentation to the class.

[Anchor 5 is not applicable to Level B learners.]

CCR Speaking & Listening Anchor 6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

- Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification. (See Language standards 1 and 3.) (SL.3.6)

Comment: See the discussion of this issue in the comments about [Level A Language Standards](#), Anchors 1 and 3.

Level B Language Standards

CCR Language Anchor 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- Use collective nouns (e.g., group).
- Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.
- Form and use regular and irregular plural nouns.
- Use reflexive pronouns (e.g., myself, ourselves).
- Form and use the past tense irregular verbs (e.g., sat, hid, told).
- Use abstract nouns (e.g., childhood).
- Form and use regular and irregular verbs.
- Form and use the simple (e.g., I walked; I walk; I will walk) verb tenses.
- Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.
- Form and use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.
- Use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
- Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences. Produce, expand, and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences (e.g., The boy watched the movie; The little boy watched the movie; The action movie was watched by the little boy). (L.2.1 and 3.1 merge)

Comment: [\[See similar comments](#) made under Level A Language Standard Anchor 1.] Points c, d, e, and I, dealing with English usage around tenses, subject/verb agreement,

focus on the difference between so-called standard English and the everyday speech of some English speakers, including some African Americans and Jamaicans, as well as many other English speakers from the Caribbean and West Africa.

The “conventions of standard English” should be addressed tactfully with all adults, without disparaging learners’ everyday speech and usage. This could be done in the context of a discussion referred to above under Speaking and Listening about the different registers people use—the informal registers we use with family and friends and the more formal registers we use at work and in the larger society. Many African Americans and Jamaicans, as well as other English speakers from the Caribbean and West Africa, are adept at “code switching” from informal registers to more formal. The point is not to speak one way or another all the time, but to be able to use the appropriate register for each situation. The ability to code switch is a great gift, almost like being bilingual. It has been used for great literary and rhetorical effects by African American writers, poets, and political figures.

It can also be emphasized that when all of us write (distance communication), we try to use standard English for reasons of clarity.

CCR Language Anchor 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- a. Capitalize holidays, product names, and geographic names.
- b. Capitalize appropriate words in titles.
- c. Use commas in greetings and closings of letters.
- d. Use commas in addresses.
- e. Use commas and quotation marks in dialogue.
- f. Use an apostrophe to form contractions and frequently occurring possessives.
- g. Form and use possessives.
- h. Use conventional spelling for high-frequency and other studied words and for adding suffixes to base words (e.g., sitting, smiled, cries, happiness).
- i. Generalize learned spelling patterns when writing words (e.g., cage → badge; boy → boil).
- j. Use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g., word families, position-based spellings, syllable patterns, ending rules, meaningful word parts) in writing words.
- k. Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings. (L.2.2 and 3.2 merge).

Comment: Points a.–g. are most likely to be addressed via the Writing Standards when writing and editing meaningful texts. Points h.–j. should be covered under Foundational Skills RF.3, “Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words (Phonics and Word Recognition).”

Point k, “Consult reference materials...” is an important activity that is most likely to take place as a part of writing. Learners will require teaching and support in how to use a print dictionary, which involves a number of sub-skills including alphabetizing and conventions of how words appear. For example, root words are followed by suffixes, so the past tense verb *walked* does not appear as such, but as present tense *walk* followed by various suffixes *-ed*, *-ing*. Using spell-check features when word processing will also require teaching and support.

CCR Language Anchor 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
 - a. Choose words and phrases for effect.
 - b. Recognize and observe differences between the conventions of spoken and written standard English. (L.3.3)

Comment: [See the Anchor 1 observation about [using the appropriate register.](#)]

CCR Language Anchor 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

- a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell).
- c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional).
- d. Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark).
- e. Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases. (L.2.4)

Comment: Similar to observations for [Level A Language Anchor 4](#), teachers should be careful not to over-emphasize using context (especially within a single sentence!) for determining meanings of words. Research has shown that there is seldom sufficient context for determining the meanings most words in most texts, even in richer texts and at much higher levels than GLE 2-3.9 (Nagy & Norman, 1987). There is also the danger that Level B readers may conflate using context to guess at *meaning* with using context as a *decoding* strategy. And, this in turn, undermines the research-based alphabetic decoding instruction at center of Reading Foundation for both 0-1.9 and 2-3.9 adults.

CCR Language Anchor 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Distinguish the literal and non-literal meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., take steps).
- b. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).
- c. Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered). (L.3.5)

Comment: Given the presence of non-native speakers in Level B classes, point a, "Distinguish the literal and non-literal meanings of words and phrases..." could be extended to include explaining the meanings of various English idioms to non-native speakers.

Points b. and c. would make good discussion topics as part of vocabulary instruction by contributing to learners' knowledge of word meanings in depth.

CCR Language Anchor 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

- Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe

(e.g., When other people are happy that makes me happy). (L.2.6) Acquire and use accurately level-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went looking for them). (L.3.6)

Comment: The most relevant part of Anchor 6 is “Acquire and use...academic and domain-specific words...” Academic or Tier 2 Words are a key feature of STAR GLE 4-8, and they can be introduced by teachers in discussion, even when learners may not encounter many in GLE 2-3.9 texts. For teaching suggestions, see Beck, et al., (2002) and Zwiers and Crawford (2011). For lists of Academic Words, see <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/wordlist/english/academic/>.

Note: In using the Oxford site, be aware of British spellings such as “honour” for “honor”. Learners will encounter “domain-specific” words like *habitat*, *cell*, *climate* from content reading.

| [➤Return to the Introduction](#)◀ |

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