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**Adult Literacy Classroom Curriculum**

Loudoun Literacy Council, the longest-running non-denominational provider of adult and family literacy services in Loudoun County, has adopted a holistic approach to teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). The framework is comprised of both life skills instructions, as well as, basic English literacy skills.

All students registering for our classes take a placement test to determine their level: beginning, intermediate, or advanced. Additionally, we talk to our students to ascertain their personal and professional goals and motivations in taking the class. We teach life skills that are tailored to our students’ needs and goals. Maybe, they want to better communicate with their child’s teacher, navigate a call to the doctor, interact with store employees, or better communicate at work. We devise a life skills curriculum for them using role-playing, games, flashcards, and apps on their phone.

This is in conjunction with the *Ventures* textbook we use to teach basic English literacy skills. *Ventures* is a series for low‐beginning to low‐advanced adult ELL students, tried and tested for being easy for teachers to use and boosting learner gains on standardized tests. The book places emphasis on using natural language in meaningful life situations.

The *Ventures* series of textbooks, published by The Cambridge University Press, is based on effective and research-based teaching:

1. Effective teaching for ESOL adults is relevant to the adult learners’ needs.

(from: <http://www.cal.org/adultesl/resources/fundamental-principles.php>)

Adults often need or prefer their learning to be immediately and obviously applicable to their life situations and contexts. Effective instruction incorporates ways of promoting and assessing learning that are built on the functions (such as giving and following instructions, working on a team, asking questions to obtain information) that learners carry out in their daily lives. It gives adult learners the tools they need to complete real-life tasks successfully by incorporating those tasks in classroom activities and requiring learners to communicate with one another to solve problems or complete tasks (Condelli, Wrigley, & Yoon, 2009; Miller, 2010; Peyton, Moore, & Young, 2010; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

2. Effective instruction integrates all communication modalities.

(from: <http://www.cal.org/adultesl/resources/fundamental-principles.php>)

Authentic communication tasks often entail integration of the four modalities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Effective instruction incorporates activities that promote the use of all four and encourage learners to use the ones in which they are stronger to support development of the others (Burt, Peyton, & Van Duzer, 2005; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010; Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010).

3. Effective instruction includes direct teaching of specific features of the language.

(from: <http://www.cal.org/adultesl/resources/fundamental-principles.php>)

Adult learners need and want to develop metacognitive awareness—understanding of the nature and structure of the language—as they are learning to use the language itself. Effective instruction responds to this need by providing direct instruction in vocabulary, grammar, and syntax as these relate to specific topic areas and task types (Burt, Peyton, & Schaetzel, 2008; Kruidenier, 2002; LarsenFreeman, 2003).

4. A focus on academic language boosts access to college and career opportunities.

(https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ELL\_Increasing\_Rigor\_508.pdf)

Academic language contains complex features of English required for the completion of higher education, access to meaningful employment, and the opportunity for professional advancement and rewards (Scarcella, 2003). Zwiers (2014) defines academic language as “the set of words, grammar, and discourse strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract concepts” (p. 22). In the realm of K–12 education, command of academic language allows young ELLs to access and develop content knowledge along with their mainstream peers in K–12 schools. In the case of adults, it is language that can be used in more complex interactions in work, community, and school contexts (e.g., the actual phrases used for building on another’s ideas in a discussion, such as Another thing to consider is...).

5. Adult ELLs need proficiency in document and informational literacy, and they need to be able to read a variety of text types, media, and formats, such as charts, graphs, or web pages (Parrish & Johnson, 2010; Wrigley, 2007).

(<https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/ELL_Increasing_Rigor_508.pdf>)

Skilled readers use a variety of strategies to access these complex written texts. Some are bottom-up strategies, such as decoding words, and many are top-down strategies, such as drawing on expectations and making assumptions, using visual cues to aid comprehension, and drawing on prior knowledge (Burt, Peyton, & Van Duzer, 2005). When following complex instructions at work or listening to lectures, skilled listeners listen selectively for particular words or phrases, monitor their comprehension, and determine what listening strategies are best suited for a particular situation (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2008). ELLs need explicit practice with these reading and listening strategies to develop more automatic use of them at work, school, and in their communities.