

DETERMINING LEARNER PROFILES TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

<http://neuhaus.org/videos/determining-learner-profiles-inform-instruction/>

THE PROBLEM

Alarming, ninety-three million adults in the US are functionally illiterate. Thirty million adults struggle with the most basic and concrete literacy skills. These adults may have dropped out of school, have undiagnosed or untreated learning disabilities, or may be speakers of languages other than English.

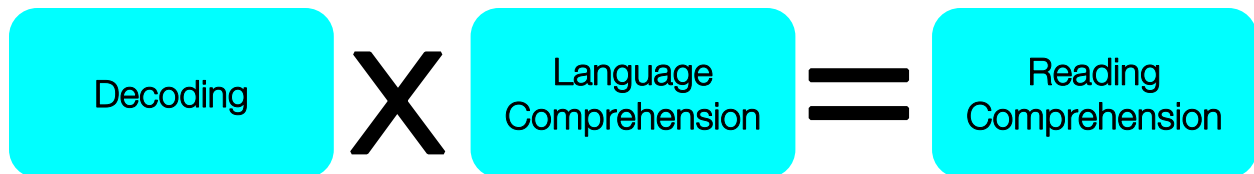
THE SOLUTION

To learn to read, these adults need an adult literacy instructor who can:

- help define individual goals
- provide a nurturing learning environment
- plan effective reading instruction to meet specific needs.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF READING: COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension is like a mathematical formula:



LEARNER PROFILES

Instruction for learners that targets their exact instructional needs results in greater gains in reading.

1	2
3	4

Learner Profile	Adequate Decoding	Adequate Language Comprehension	Description of Learner
1	✓	✓	has achieved the goal of literacy instruction and has the reading skills necessary for achievement in school, jobs, and life
2	✗	✓	has adequate language comprehension but struggles to decode words; could be diagnosed as having dyslexia, which is a specific difficulty in decoding and spelling

Learner Profile	Adequate Decoding	Adequate Language Comprehension	Description of Learner
3	✓	✗	can read any word on any page but struggles to understand what he or she is reading; could be diagnosed with a language-learning disability, or could be learning English as a second language
4	✗	✗	does not have adequate decoding or language comprehension skills; struggles with decoding and understanding; in spite of the most intensive instruction, may always struggle with reading; may improve his or her job opportunities and quality of life because of increased literacy skills

DETERMINING LEARNER PROFILES

1	2
3	4

DATA FROM STANDARDIZED TESTS

- A learner who has adequate decoding and language comprehension skills will score at or above the 40th percentile on a subtest of Reading Comprehension. Learners with scores close to the 40th percentile benefit from additional instruction.
- Decoding can be measured by subtests such as Word Attack, reading nonsense or pseudo-word, or Word Recognition, reading real short and long words. Learners who score below the 40th percentile will need explicit and systematic decoding instruction.
- Language Comprehension can be measured with subtests of Vocabulary and Listening Comprehension. Learners who score below the 40th percentile will need explicit language comprehension instruction.

Brandon		Age 20
Brandon is struggling to keep up with his classes at a local community college.		
Subtest	Percentile	
Reading Comprehension	40 th	
Word Recognition	41 th	
Word Attack	44 th	
Listening Comprehension	43 rd	
Vocabulary	42 nd	

Literacy Strengths:

Reading Comprehension
 Listening Comprehension
 Vocabulary
 Word Recognition
 Word Attack

Literacy Needs:

—

Learner Profile: 1

Instruction: It would be beneficial to emphasize Decoding and Language Comprehension to improve his skills for college work and keep him from slipping below the 40th percentile

Hilda Age 36	
Hilda struggled in school but never received any special education services or support.	
Subtest	Percentile
Reading Comprehension	29 th
Word Recognition	28 th
Word Attack	27 th
Listening Comprehension	60 th
Vocabulary	40 th

Literacy Strengths:
 Listening Comprehension
 Vocabulary

Literacy Needs:
 Reading Comprehension
 Word Recognition
 Word Attack

Learner Profile: 2
Instruction: Emphasize Decoding; this profile and history is characteristic of dyslexia

Stefano Age 28	
Stefano taught himself to speak English by watching English TV and movies with subtitles.	
Subtest	Percentile
Reading Comprehension	35 th
Word Recognition	48 th
Word Attack	55 th
Listening Comprehension	30 th
Vocabulary	30 th

Literacy Strengths:
 Word Recognition
 Word Attack

Literacy Needs:
 Reading Comprehension
 Listening Comprehension
 Vocabulary

Learner Profile: 3
Instruction: Emphasize Language Comprehension

Frank Age 45	
Frank was in special education classes for most of his schooling. He dropped out of school at age 16.	
Subtest	Percentile
Reading Comprehension	29 th
Word Recognition	25 th
Word Attack	27 th
Listening Comprehension	30 th
Vocabulary	31 st

Literacy Strengths:
 —

Literacy Needs:
 Reading Comprehension
 Listening Comprehension
 Vocabulary
 Word Recognition
 Word Attack

Learner Profile: 4
Instruction: Emphasize intensive Decoding and Language Comprehension

OBSERVATIONAL DATA

Inadequate Decoding	Inadequate Language Comprehension
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner skips or misreads one or more words in every 10 words read.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner cannot answer questions correctly after reading a passage.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner reads with a slow and labored pace.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner cannot answer questions correctly after listening to a passage.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner sounds out most of the words that he or she reads.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner has limited speaking vocabulary.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner misreads common sight words (<i>said, they, where</i>) or confuses words (<i>here for there; when for went</i>).	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner does not understand jokes, riddles, or comics that use a play-on-words.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner's error rate and pace does not improve when reading a lower-level passage.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner's understanding does not improve when reading a lower-level passage.
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner answers questions correctly after listening to a passage much better than after reading a passage.	<input type="checkbox"/> Learner does not understand the meanings of many of the words that he or she can read.

- If all or most of the boxes in the first column but none in the second column are checked, a learner may have inadequate decoding skills but adequate language comprehension.
- If all or most of the boxes in the second column but none in the first column are checked, a learner may have inadequate language comprehension skills.
- If you can check off all or most of the boxes in the first column and all or most of the boxes in the second column, a learner most likely has inadequate decoding and language comprehension skills.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION BY LEARNER PROFILES (LP)

LP 2 AND 4 (HILDA AND FRANK): DECODING INSTRUCTION

- The video entitled *The Structure of the English Language* provides information about the skills that need to be taught explicitly and systematically for accurate and automatic decoding.
- Learners need to practice reading word lists, sentences, and texts to build words and word patterns in memory.

LP 3 AND 4 (STEFANO AND FRANK): LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

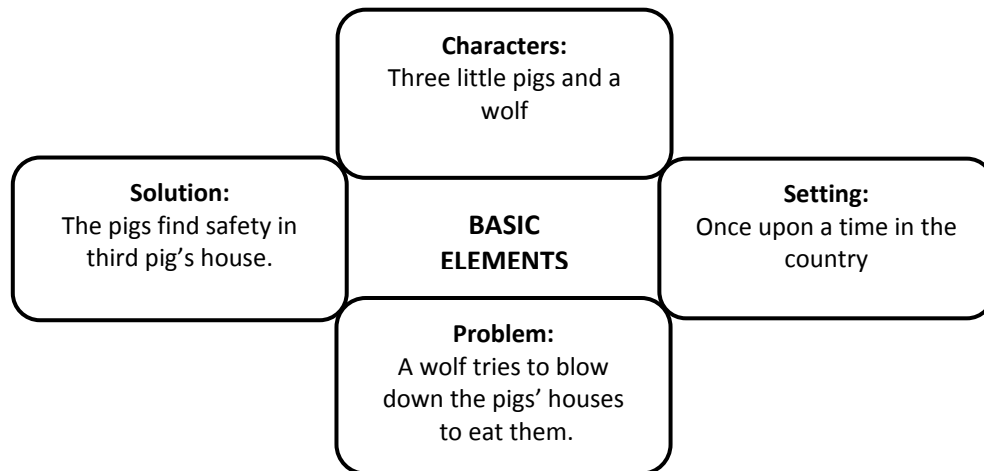
- Engage learners in discussions and conversations.
- Provide appropriately leveled books for wide reading to increase vocabulary and world knowledge.
- Read books to learners at levels above their reading levels.

LP 1 (BRANDON): ACCELERATED DECODING AND LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

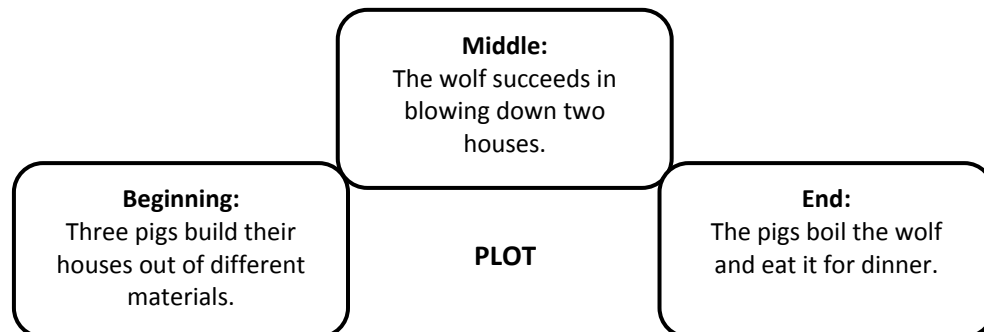
The Brandons of the world need enhanced Decoding and Language Comprehension instruction that can be found at <http://www.neuhausacademy.org>.

ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Discuss multiple meanings of words (e.g., run functioning as a verb can mean to gallop, to race, to flow, to continue, to leave quickly, to campaign). Present a sentence and discuss the meaning of the word conveyed in the sentence. For example: What does run mean in this sentence and how do you know: Do you think the mayor will run for president?
- Teach different structures of narrative or literary text and have learners identify all the elements in a passage. Narrative or literary text tells a story. There are characters, a setting, a problem, and a solution.



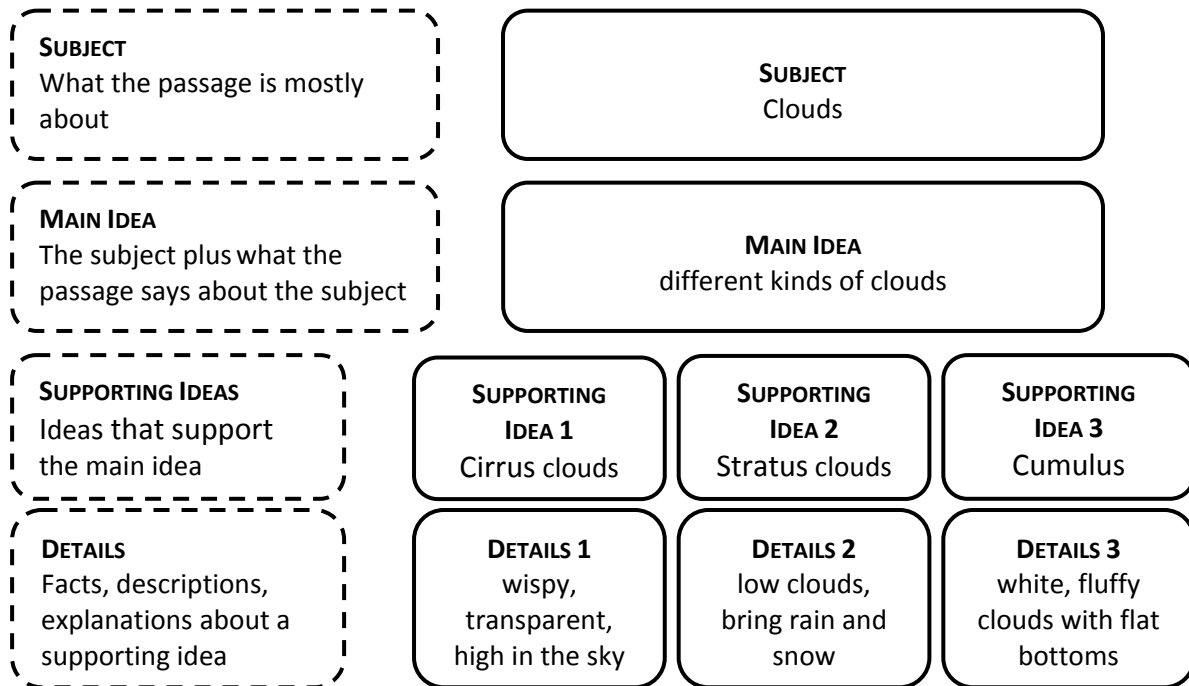
There is also a plot that has a beginning, middle, and end. When learners can identify these elements, they should be encouraged to retell the passage in their own words, with the elements providing a guide for the retelling.



And there is an overarching theme or big idea.



- Teach the structure of expository or informational text, which gives information. Have learners identify the elements in a passage. There is a subject, a main idea that is the subject plus what the passage says about the subject, some supporting ideas, and several details.



When learners can identify these elements, they should be encouraged to retell the passage in their own words, with the elements providing a guide for the retelling.

- An inference is an understanding that is implied by a text and requires readers to integrate information in the text. Inferences are important to comprehension. Present short passages. Learners determine inferences that can be made. For example, in this passage:

The rooster crowed as the sun began to glisten on the freshly fallen snow. Maggie raced down the stairs and grabbed a piece of toast. Once again, she had to run to catch the school bus.

These inferences could be made: It is morning (*the rooster crowed*); it is winter (*freshly fallen snow*); Maggie overslept (*raced down the stairs; had to run*); Maggie often oversleeps (*once again*); and Maggie is on her way to school (*to catch the school bus*).

- Inferences can be taught at a sentence level. For example: *Teddy barks at the door*. Who is Teddy in this sentence? Learners could infer that because Teddy barks and dogs bark, Teddy must be a dog. Why is Teddy barking at the door? Learners could infer that Teddy barks to go outside or come inside or maybe someone has come to the door.