LINCS
Literacy Information and Communication System

Meeting the Language Needs of
TODAY'S ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER
Companion Learning Resource

Welcome to *Meeting the Language Needs of Today's Adult English Language Learner: Companion Learning Resource.* Here you will find examples of approaches, strategies, and lesson ideas that will lead you to more engaging, rigorous, and effective English language acquisition (ELA) instruction. You will also find numerous links to websites, videos, audio files, and more. Each link is an invitation to explore rigorous ELA instruction more deeply, guiding you to enhanced teaching and learning!

CONTENTS

This RESOURCE addresses the following three guiding questions:

- What do today's adult ELLs need to know and be able to do in order to thrive in today's world?

- What are the evidence-based instructional practices that allow learners to engage deeply with target knowledge and skills?

- What literacy practices improve adult ELLs' ability to access more complex texts, employ evidence, and build knowledge in a variety of content areas?

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Adult English language learners (ELLs) are in transition. They are receiving adult education services in order to transition into the next phase in their lives. To do this successfully, they may need to become more comfortable and confident in navigating their communities, obtain skills to find or advance employment, or perhaps earn a college degree. Engaging in today's communities, careers, and postsecondary opportunities demands more complex language, higher level reading skills, more effective communication skills, and stronger **critical thinking** skills than in decades past. Employers and college instructors alike value people who can work well in teams, gather knowledge from print and digital documents, use sensibly gathered information to make informed decisions, and manage their time and resources wisely to solve problems efficiently. This is a greater challenge for non-native English speakers than for other adult learners due to their varied educational and cultural backgrounds as well as the linguistic demands of 21st century careers, schools, and communities.

This RESOURCE, although undergirded by current research and trends in the field of adult English language acquisition (ELA),[1] is not intended to provide a thorough research review or a step-by-step guide to designing instruction. To learn more about relevant research or to engage in a guided professional development process for creating more **rigorous instruction**, please refer to the two complementary resources below, available on the **LINCS ESL Pro landing page**:

- *Meeting the Language Needs of Today's Adult English Language Learner: Issue Brief (BRIEF).* This BRIEF provides an overview of the need for increased rigor in all ELA programs, whether in a literacy-level class for newcomers or a contextualized career pathways program. It is intended to provide a broad background for additional in-depth resources for teachers and administrators (Parrish, 2015).

Instructors can explore the Companion Learning Resource as part of a professional learning community (PLC) activity.

- *Meeting the Language Needs of Today's Adult English Language Learner: Professional Development Module (PD MODULE).* This online, self-access module on meeting the language needs of adult English language learners (ELLs) in today's world provides in-depth information, interactive tasks, video demonstrations, and application/reflection activities for teachers as well as administrators.

All of the resources used in this RESOURCE are used with permission of the author or organization, as indicated in **Appendix: Permissions**.

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[1] The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) uses the term *English language acquisition* (ELA) to describe English language instruction for non-native English speakers instead of the traditional ESL or ESOL terminology.

How Can We Meet the Language Needs of Today's Adult ELLs?

> We need to do both: build students' complex language as we augment how we assess higher-order thinking and conceptual understandings (Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2013). Learn more at the Academic Language Development Network and Jeff Zwiers' Academic Language and Literacy site.

Teaching adult ELLs in the United States has historically involved teaching "life-skills English"—the communication and community skills that immigrant and refugee students need to navigate their daily lives. For decades, our work has involved topics such as going to the grocery store, finding housing, exploring occupations, interacting at various places in our cities, managing family health, and so forth. Certainly, these are vital skills and need to be taught, particularly to new arrivals to the United States. However, changes in the field are moving adult ELA practitioners to consider students' goals in longer terms. Adult ELA is part of the larger field of adult education, and we play a major role in preparing learners for postsecondary opportunities, career training, better paying jobs, and deeper, more rewarding community involvement. Preparing students for success in college, careers, and their communities today requires that teachers gain new skills and strategies for the classroom. Such instruction demands infusing critical thinking skills, academic language, and digital literacy at all levels (for more on digital literacy, see *Integrating Digital Literacy into English Language Instruction: Issue Brief, Companion Learning Resource, and Professional Development Module*, all of which are available at https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/eslpro). Innovative practices such as combining ELA with preparation for a specific career pathway are an efficient way to prepare students for the workforce (see *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways: Issue Brief, Companion Learning Resource, and Professional Development Module*, all of which are available at https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/eslpro). Across adult ELA programs and contexts, we are now challenged to "up the bar" of instruction and make our classrooms even more engaging and rigorous.

In her 2010 Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) brief, *Promoting Learner Engagement When Working With Adult English Language Learners*, Finn Miller (2010) makes the case for teaching approaches that value authentic interaction, solve real-world problems, are cognitively complex and collaborative in nature, and connect the classroom to students' daily lives in meaningful ways. When our instruction is more engaging to learners, more progress can be made toward students' long-term goals.

Preparing students in adult education for achieving their long-term goals as citizens, family members, and workers involves addressing agreed-upon career and college readiness skills. As outlined by Mathews-Aydinli in her 2006 CAELA Brief, *Supporting Adult English Language Learners' Transitions to Postsecondary Education*, transitioning into college or work training from traditional ELA instruction is no easy task for learners. However, ELA instructors can do much to ease these transitions by emphasizing academic language, critical thinking, and more rigorous reading skills in our classrooms.

Reading and writing well are paramount to success in college, careers, and community involvement, and as ELA practitioners, we know that reading and writing in a second language is even more challenging! Teaching strong literacy skills to adult ELLs requires knowledge both of literacy development *and* language development, as described in *Reading and Adult English Language Learners: A Review of the Research* (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003) and *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ From ABE Reading Instruction?* (Burt, Peyton, & Van Duzer, 2005). Balancing our roles as both language and literacy instructors is complicated and anything but tidy, and this resource offers adult educators a place to begin exploring these important topics.

Since the publication of the two resources on adult ELL reading mentioned earlier (Burt et al., 2003, 2005), the field has benefited from a robust discussion of exactly what reading and writing skills are needed for success in college and the workplace. In the *College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education* (CCRS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), the same priority skills that Mathews-Aydinli (2006) identified as crucial for transitioning to college

During a field trip with her ELA class, this learner practices the language required to navigate the city bus system.

Students in today's adult ELA classes need to develop academic language and literacy for a variety of career, postsecondary, and community goals.

(academic language, critical thinking, and learning from complex informational texts) are present throughout the English Language Arts/Literacy strands. The skills outlined in the CCRS are necessary for *all* students who embark on postsecondary options, career training opportunities, or who seek deeper involvement in their communities. Using **content standards** (such as the CCRS or other state-adopted standards) to plan instruction is an increasingly important skill for educators of adult ELLs, not only to comply with local, state, and federal requirements, but also because content standards offer a common language and a common vision to adult educators for the complex work we all do (see *Understanding Adult ESL Content Standards* [Young & Smith, 2006]). As Young and Smith (2006) explain, content standards offer a way to describe progress along the continuum of language and literacy development. Further guidance on putting content standards to use can be found in *Using Adult ESL Content Standards* (Schaetzel & Young, 2007).

As adult ELA instructors refine and redefine their roles in the larger field of adult education, we bring crucial expertise in the language support needed for adult ELLs to reach their goals. By connecting our teaching to students' career, educational, and community involvement goals in engaging ways, we can close the gap between our classrooms and the "what's next"

that adult learners are working toward. To learn more about classroom strategies to engage learners, see the LINCS ELL-U online course called *Principles of Second Language Teaching: Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction*.

How to Navigate This RESOURCE

The diagram below illustrates different sections of this RESOURCE, which can be read independent of each other and in any order. To navigate this resource, you can:

- Click through pages sequentially or use the Bookmarks panel to navigate to specific sections of the document.

- Click on links to listen to each Voices From the Field segment. Or click on "Transcript" to view the written version of each audio file. Click "Back" to return to the main narrative.

- Click on links to videos that offer more information. Some videos may originate from other public and private organizations.* Only videos without closed captioning are summarized in Addendum B, which can be accessed by clicking on "Summary" within the main narrative. At the end of each summary, click "Back" to return to the main narrative.

- Search for a resource by type or proficiency level in the *Resource Index*.

- View a full-size version of graphics by selecting "click to enlarge." Click "Back" to return to the main narrative.

Note: A quick way to locate items is to search for a word or phrase by clicking *Edit>Find* in the main menu and entering your search term.
* Links to these videos are provided for the user's convenience. We cannot control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, completeness, or accessibility of the content in these videos.

click to enlarge
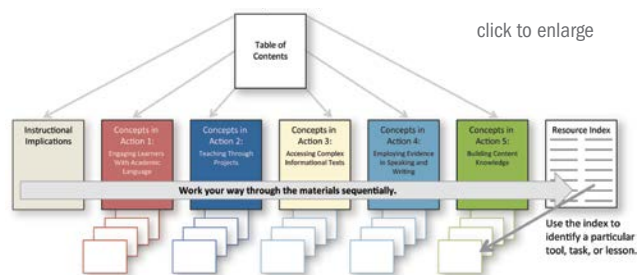
What Will You Find in This RESOURCE?

- *Concepts in Action*, which articulate key ideas in meeting the language needs of today's adult ELLs
- *Key Considerations* for the five "Concepts in Action" themes of this resource
- *Learning Environments* that depict different contexts for ELA and provide the instructional setting for the various lessons and materials shared
- *Voices From the Field*, where educators describe their strategies for increasing the rigor of ELA instruction (users can click on external links to listen to each Voices From the Field segment or read written transcripts for each in Addendum A)
- *Take a Tip* and *Teachers Ask*, which provide practical support for specific areas of instruction
- Links to videos, resources, and websites to support you (summaries in Addendum B are provided for only those videos without closed captioning)
- Glossary of terms (Page 29)
- *Resource Index*, which provides links to referenced resources (Page 26)

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

This student is engaging with English literacy in a hands-on vocabulary task.

What Is Rigorous Adult ELA Instruction?

Gaps exist between what is traditionally taught in adult ELA classes and the actual language demands of work, further education, and training. (**Parrish, 2015**)

Adult ELA instruction needs to do more than help students "get by" in English, but what does that mean exactly? What is "rigor" in the context of adult English language teaching and learning? As Parrish (2015) outlines in her *Issue Brief*, rigorous instruction means emphasizing academic language, **language strategies**, and critical thinking in ELA teaching.

Academic language (discussed in the **next section**) is, put simply, the language of access. This means access to academic content and powerful social structures. It is the difference between the language you use in a text to your roommate and the language you use in an email to your supervisor, or between the language use in making an appointment with a banker and calling an old friend to confirm a shopping date. Academic language is a second

language for all of us. Without explicit and intentional instruction in understanding and using academic language, adult ELLs lack a powerful tool necessary to make progress toward their long-term goals. An excellent resource for further reading and materials around building ELLs' academic language can be found at the Understanding Language site, housed at Stanford University, linked directly **here** and also linked through the **LINCS collection**.

Language strategies are things we do to gain access to complex written and oral texts (for more on **text complexity**, visit **Accessing Complex Informational Texts**). For example, when encountering a letter from the local city government about upcoming street and sidewalk closures, we may re-read the letter, recall a news broadcast we saw on the same topic, consult the photographs and map on the page, and go to the website listed for further information. These are all language strategies that we employ when encountering a text that is unfamiliar and challenging.

Critical thinking involves analyzing relationships between ideas, evaluating information, and solving problems by

★ **TAKE A TIP: FRAMEWORK FOR RAISING EXPECTATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL RIGOR FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**
For more information about current efforts to help English learners meet higher expectations through more rigorous instruction, see *A Framework for Raising Expectations and Instructional Rigor for English Language Learners* (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2014), released in August 2014 and available on **LINCS**.

applying information thoughtfully to new situations. It is a highly valued skill in today's workplaces and colleges, and it is also needed to thrive in today's communities (**Parrish & Johnson, 2010**). Embedding critical thinking in ELA instruction can and should happen from the start; there is no need to wait for advanced language proficiency. Students can work together to solve problems in their schools or communities (see discussion on **project-based learning** in the second Concept in Action).

How Are These Three Elements of Rigorous Instruction Connected?

When students are working on a meaningful topic or project that has a real-life application, they must think critically to tackle real and worthwhile questions together. They must understand and use academic language to get such important work done. In doing so, they must employ many language strategies to access reading and listening texts and to communicate with each other.

What Does Rigorous Adult ELA Instruction Look Like?

In this RESOURCE, rigorous instruction is demystified through five Concepts in Action. We begin with what engaging learners in academic language looks like in practice. Next, we zoom in on one approach, **project-based learning** (PBL). PBL is one way to meet the many rigorous language demands students need to succeed in postsecondary, career, and community opportunities. The critical role of strong reading skills cannot be overlooked when preparing adult ELLs to transition into "what's next" in their lives. The final three Concepts in Action explore key priorities in literacy instruction for adult ELA: accessing complex texts, using evidence to support claims, and building **content knowledge** through informational texts.
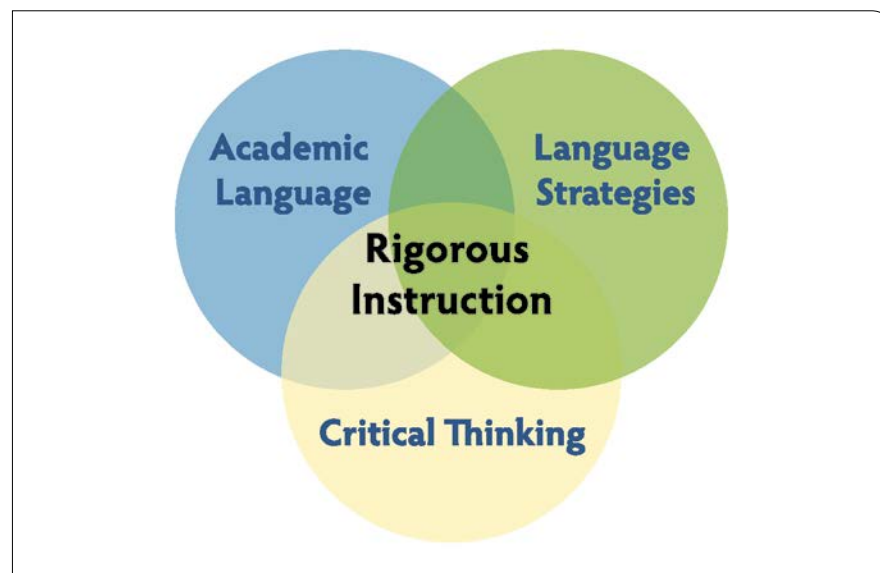
CONCEPTS IN ACTION 1

Giving oral presentations, even brief and informal ones, is excellent preparation for the academic language demands of today's workplaces and postsecondary settings.

Engaging Learners With Academic Language

Academic language is the set of words, grammar, and discourse strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher order thinking processes, and abstract concepts. (Zwiers, 2014, p. 22)

Teachers need to know the language that is running the learning show in each lesson. The more we develop students' language and literacy skills needed for learning, the better all students will learn the content in enduring ways. And vice versa. (Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2013)

What Is It?

In order to reach their goals, adult ELLs need to be able to understand and use academic language, the "narrow range of accents, vocabulary, and grammar typically valued by those in power" (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Zwiers, 2014, p. 2). Academic language is a second language for everyone! In general, we don't use this type of language in our everyday interactions in our homes or with friends, but we absolutely use academic language when interacting with supervisors, instructors, employers, landlords, bankers, police, health care workers, and so on. It is the language of so much of the print we encounter in our lives: the textbooks we learn from, the contracts we sign, the bills we pay, the memos from our bosses, and the emails from our children's teachers that we read and base decisions upon. Without regular and intentional practice with academic language, adult ELLs are left at a severe disadvantage in their workplaces, communities, and career training courses. We can do much to close this gap!
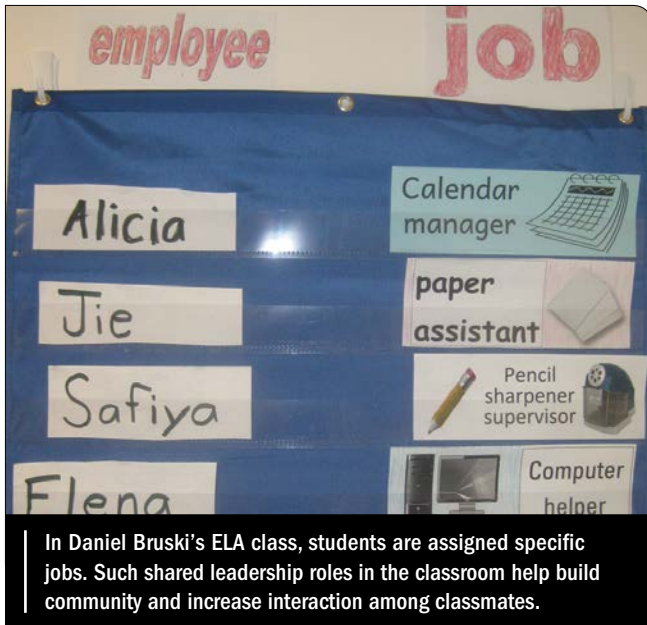
VOICES FROM THE FIELD Audio | Transcript
Susan Finn Miller, a teacher and teacher educator in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, describes **learner engagement**.

TAKE A TIP: SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND VOCABULARY TEACHING
Vocabulary is a key part of academic language acquisition. If you're interested in learning more about how languages are learned, see the LINCS Learning Portal ELL-U online course called *Second Language Acquisition—Myths, Beliefs, and What the Research Shows*. Interested specifically in more ideas for vocabulary teaching? Check out the LINCS Resource Collection for adult ELL instructors, with links to these (and more!) resources: New American Horizons video *Growing Vocabulary With Beginning Learners* (**Summary**) and *Vocabulary Notebooks: Theoretical Underpinnings and Practical Suggestions*.

In Daniel Bruski's ELA class, students are assigned specific jobs. Such shared leadership roles in the classroom help build community and increase interaction among classmates.
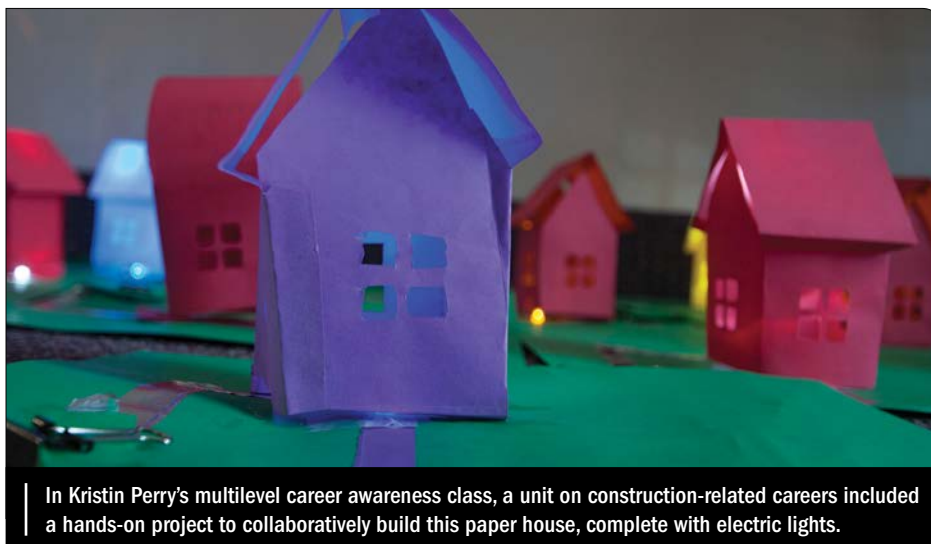
? TEACHERS ASK: *How can I explore careers with a multilevel ESL class with so many varying educational backgrounds, goals, and interests?*

Kristin Perry responds: Exploring careers with a multilevel class is not only possible, it also offers limitless possibilities for students to bring their life skills to the classroom and connect the pieces between what they already know and what they need to know about working in their new communities. Regardless of educational backgrounds, goals, and interests, each student has already made a contribution to his or her community through work. When exploring careers, we have a unique opportunity to allow students to contribute all the knowledge they have to offer. Here are a few ideas to build on prior knowledge and bring the world of work to life:

- Make the instruction practical by giving students classroom jobs where they can assist with such tasks as taking attendance, calendar work, clean-up, passing out papers, making copies, and so forth.
- Make it interesting by exploring a range of jobs across all skill levels.
- Make it about exploring options and setting appropriate individual goals.
- Make it a model of a work environment by setting clear expectations and creating hands-on experiences.
- Make it holistic by integrating many different aspects of the work world—expectations, requirements, goal setting, career clusters, job searches, applications, interviews, and money matters.

Key Consideration: What does engaging learners with academic language look like with a multilevel class?

Engaging a multilevel group with academic language is not easy, but it can be done! In this example, a lesson on construction and housing-related careers emphasizes academic vocabulary and phrases and engages students in teamwork and challenging critical thinking tasks. The lesson is from a **curriculum** specifically designed for low-beginning through high-intermediate adult ELLs. The multilevel curriculum teaches work readiness and community involvement skills and gives students exposure to different career clusters and job opportunities. To learn more about career pathways and contextualized ELA instruction see *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways: Issue Brief, Companion Learning Resource, and Professional Development Module*. To learn more about working with learners in your multilevel classes who have low levels of formal schooling and literacy, see the LINCS ELL-U course on *Teaching Adult ELLs Who Are Emergent Readers*.

In this specific, culminating lesson example, a multilevel ELA class works in teams to complete a small-scale classroom project demonstrating understanding of construction- and housing-related jobs including architect, carpenter, landscaper, and landlord. This lesson reinforces academic vocabulary and concepts related to one career cluster (housing and construction), and it requires much student-to-student interaction and careful listening to complete the tasks. This lesson was adapted from a multilevel career awareness curriculum from Hmong American Partnership in St. Paul, Minnesota, posted online **here**.

Note: This lesson comes at the *end* of a multiweek unit on housing and construction-related careers.

Lesson From a Multilevel Career Awareness Class: Construction Careers Group Project

ACTIVITY	HOW DOES IT WORK WITH A MULTILEVEL CLASS?
Review in a large group: *What are jobs related to housing?* Teacher shows photographs of construction zones and various types of buildings to the class and elicits their answers. As they mention specific jobs, she writes them on the board. *For example: construction worker, architect, landscape designer, gardener, janitor, painter, carpenter, roofer, realtor, electrician*	All students can contribute to this initial elicitation. Teacher is careful not to allow higher level students to dominate the discussion and calls on lower level students often.
Continued review: Matching names of jobs to accompanying photograph. Matching sentences describing a person's job to that photograph. *"A carpenter makes things out of wood, like stairs and window frames."*	Students with lower reading levels are given only the name of the job on a card to match to the appropriate photo or figure. Students with higher level reading skills are given full sentences to match to the photo or figure.
Focus then shifts to designing and constructing houses, and the following vocabulary is emphasized. ■ *Who draws how to build a house? (architect)* ■ *Who builds the house? (construction worker)* ■ *Who designs the outside? (landscape designer)* ■ *Who puts on the roof? (roofer)* ■ *Who wires the electricity? (electrician)*	All students can participate in this vocabulary review. Then students are directed to a site the school has set up for this unit (**www.learningchocolate.com**). Each student can work at his or her own pace on the following topics: construction jobs, equipment, signs, and problems. **http://hapu123.weebly.com/construction.html**
This is a small hands-on group project, and the major work of this culminating lesson for the housing unit is now used to reinforce vocabulary and give students many opportunities to talk, read, and write together. Students are put in teams to construct a house out of paper using a model and detailed written instructions. Each team must read instructions, construct the house (including electric lights!), and then write sentences about the jobs involved in making a real house. As they work, teams are directed to use the vocabulary learned orally and online in this lesson and to write several sentences about the house they have created. Once the houses are complete, teams show their constructions and read their stories aloud to the large group.	As Jayme Adelson-Goldstein points out in her Teachers Ask contribution on **page 17**, hands-on projects allow all students to participate in whatever way they are able. In this project, some students are reading the written instructions, others are making the house itself, and others are writing sentences that tell the sequence of their mini construction project. A confident speaker can be the one to read the final written text aloud to the larger class. *Culminating writing example: "First, Teacher Hnou designed the house and told us how to make it. Teacher is the architect. Then Thao read the instructions. He is the foreman. Then, Ahmed and Ba cut the papers and glued them together. They are the construction workers. Ger is the roofer, she put the top on the house. Kao drew the outside flowers, she is the landscape designer. The electricity was wired by Uba, she is the electrician."*

In Kristin Perry's multilevel career awareness class, a unit on construction-related careers included a hands-on project to collaboratively build this paper house, complete with electric lights.

Key Consideration: How can adult ELA classrooms bridge to the real world, leading to increased learner engagement and further practice with academic language?

Teaching academic language involves giving students opportunities to practice difficult language skills within the safe and supportive environments of our classrooms. When students go to college or enter certain careers, they need to work in teams and prepare short presentations in English. To prepare for such tasks, learners need to practice collecting information to make sound decisions, justify those decisions to others, and stay organized in the process! In this lesson example, the focus is on self-management and organizing classroom materials (see classroom video and materials **here**). However, the instructor then extends this learning by connecting it to a workplace and requiring a short presentation to the class. Students in this lesson engage with a real-world problem, gather information from readings and from each other, work together to create a solution, and then present that solution to the class. The lesson below lists the instructions given to learners for a series of small group tasks. The accompanying callout boxes highlight the academic language strategies and additional academic skills this lesson addresses.

Documents in the Workplace Lesson

Effectively communicate and collaborate with diverse partners.

1. Make a team of 2 to 4 students.

2. Choose a type of workplace that interests you—where you work now or where you may want to work in the future.

   Examples: restaurant, medical clinic, taxi company

3. Your project is to find out hat kinds of documents are used in that type of workplace and how they are organized. Some may be paper files; others m y be on the computer.

Draw on prior knowledge.

4. Think about what you already know from your experience.

5. Use the chart on the back to write the information.

Make a plan to complete a task.

6. Make a plan with your team about how you will get more information.

   Options:
   - Talk to a friend or family member who has a job in this kind of workplace.
   - Ask your supervisor or manager.
   - Visit a workplace and talk to an employee or manager.
   - Look on the Internet. Visit the library. Read books or articles.

   Gather information from texts, interviews, and the Internet.

   OUR TEAM PLAN: DUE DATE _____ What Who By When
   Example: Ask wife (she works in health clinic) Abdi 9/21

Use graphic organizers to keep information clear.

7. Write all the information in the chart on the back. Get examples of documents if possible.

8. When you finish you may choose to type the information in Microsoft Word (optional).

   Use technology to practice digital literacy skills for an authentic task.

Summarize and synthesize information.

9. Present your information to the class. Show your chart on the board and teach your classmates about document organization in this kind of workplace.

   Make decisions based on data gathered.

Critically think about how teams worked together and what was learned.

10. Reflect—H w was your teamwork? Did you learn some interesting new information?

A video of the full *Documents in the Workplace* lesson is available **here**. Complete write-ups of this lesson plan differentiated for beginning, intermediate, and advanced adult ELLs are available via Minnesota's **ATLAS** (ABE Teaching and Learning Advancement System).

★ **TAKE A TIP: REAL-WORLD CONNECTIONS**
For additional examples of bridging ELA classroom instruction to the real world, see this video from Heide Spruck Wrigley, *How Much Are the Peppers?* (**Summary**) of an ELA class field trip to a local farm as well as this video from New American Horizons, *Building Literacy With Adult Emergent Readers* (**Summary**), illustrating a language lesson following a hardware store visit to find items for household pest control.

Key Consideration: What is a *line of inquiry* and how might organizing instruction around a line of inquiry assist in engaging learners with academic language?

For decades, adult ELA textbooks and instruction have typically been organized around themes such as housing, family, jobs, food, health, and transportation. These relevant themes provide a "hook" on which our learners can hang their newly acquired vocabulary and phrases as they read, write, and talk about the topic at hand for a few days or weeks. Such themes are a useful way for teachers to organize their materials, resources, and plans for the classroom. However, as we move toward more rigorous instruction that better prepares learners for postsecondary education, careers, and more engaged community involvement, we must find ways of organizing instruction that are richer and more engaging for learners. The traditional themes are still useful, but we can add a new layer to our organization. A "**line of inquiry**" is another way to organize ELA instruction that goes deeper and allows students to explore a meaningful topic more fully. In a line of inquiry, there is a real-world application, and perhaps a problem to be solved, such as the one outlined in this section, "How can crime be prevented?" Digging into such a line of inquiry over several lessons requires more and closer reading of informational texts and frequent use of academic language, and demands critical thinking as students work in teams to answer interesting questions.

In this specific example, an intermediate ELA class explores the line of inquiry, "How can crime be prevented?" A traditional thematic unit may have focused on simply "Calling 911," but the line of inquiry moves the instruction deeper. The following example of a rigorous unit of instruction is from *Using English*, a problem-based curriculum from St. Paul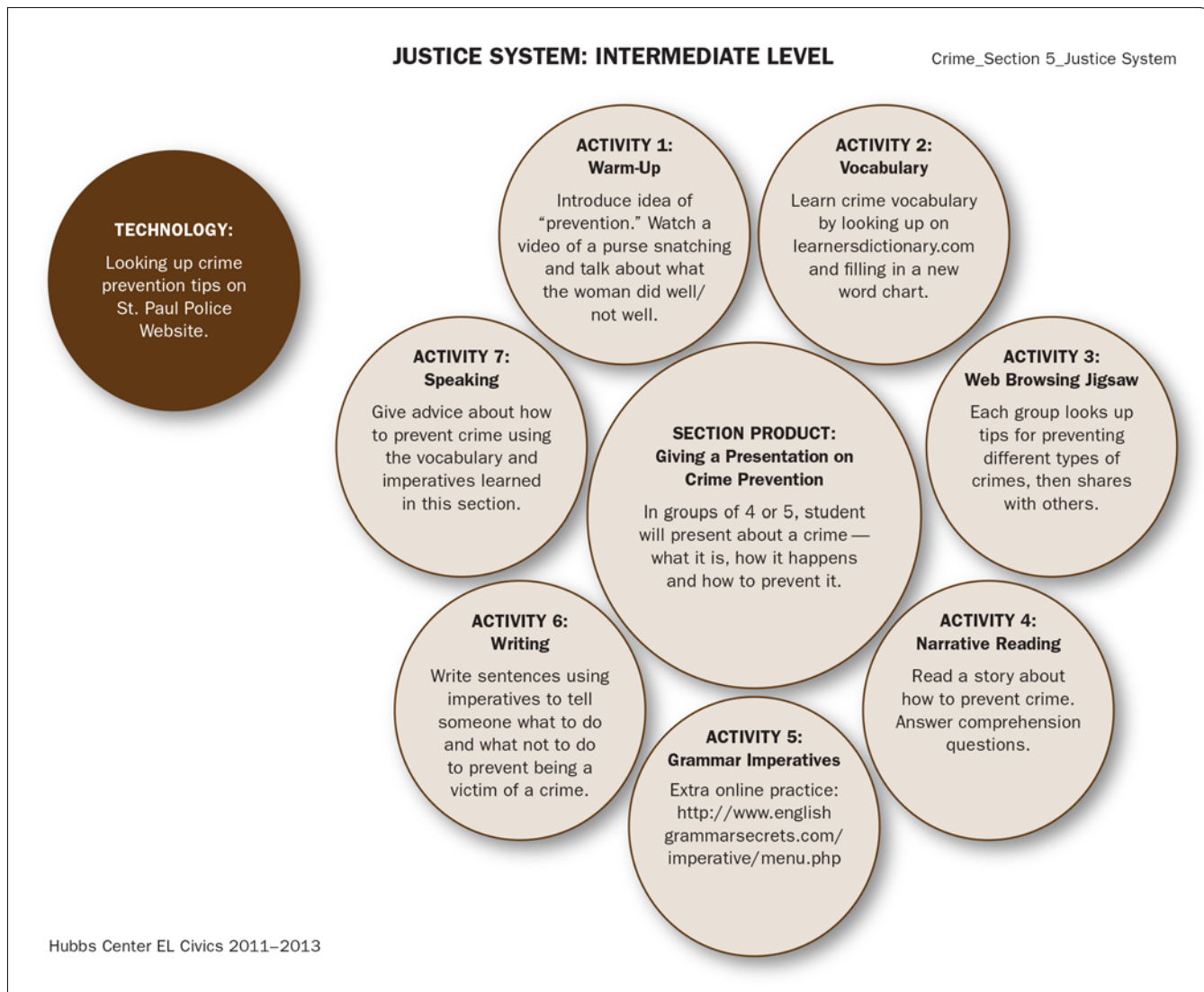 Public Schools. Each unit of the curriculum ends with a tangible student product or project (such as the creation of a presentation or poster) that requires teamwork, language strategies, critical thinking, and academic language.

Take a look at the visual model of a crime prevention unit and notice how it integrates listening, reading, speaking, writing, digital literacy, and results in a meaningful product based on a relevant and interesting line of inquiry for adult ELLs. This unit involves work around academic vocabulary such as *vulnerable*, *incident*, and *instinct*. It requires students to think critically about their communities and their behaviors and use language strategies such as drawing inferences from readings and summarizing information in order to make a group presentation. It also requires students to research crime prevention tips on a local police website. (For more information on digital literacy integration, see *Integrating Digital Literacy Into English Language Instruction: Issue Brief, Companion Learning Resource, and Professional Development Module*).

ELA instructor Elizabeth Andress assists a student with a sorting task related to organizing documents in the workplace.

TEACHERS ASK: *What are the benefits of using a line of inquiry?*
Establishing *lines of inquiry* is a way to organize ELA instruction that goes deeper and allows students to explore a meaningful topic more fully than a more traditional thematic organizational approach. With a line of inquiry, there is a real-world application and perhaps a problem to be solved. For example, instead of simply teaching a "transportation" unit that emphasizes basic vocabulary and reading bus schedules, a related line of inquiry might be, "What are the benefits and disadvantages of public transportation options in my city?" This question sets up the unit for more critical thinking and deeper exploration around transportation, perhaps branching into how cities make decisions about transportation and even reaching into issues of equity that may concern students.

JUSTICE SYSTEM: INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Crime_Section 5_Justice System

TECHNOLOGY:
Looking up crime prevention tips on St. Paul Police Website.

ACTIVITY 1:
Warm-Up
Introduce idea of "prevention." Watch a video of a purse snatching and talk about what the woman did well/not well.

ACTIVITY 2:
Vocabulary
Learn crime vocabulary by looking up on learnersdictionary.com and filling in a new word chart.

ACTIVITY 7:
Speaking
Give advice about how to prevent crime using the vocabulary and imperatives learned in this section.

SECTION PRODUCT:
Giving a Presentation on Crime Prevention
In groups of 4 or 5, student will present about a crime — what it is, how it happens and how to prevent it.

ACTIVITY 3:
Web Browsing Jigsaw
Each group looks up tips for preventing different types of crimes, then shares with others.

ACTIVITY 6:
Writing
Write sentences using imperatives to tell someone what to do and what not to do to prevent being a victim of a crime.

ACTIVITY 5:
Grammar Imperatives
Extra online practice: http://www.english grammarsecrets.com/imperative/menu.php

ACTIVITY 4:
Narrative Reading
Read a story about how to prevent crime. Answer comprehension questions.

Hubbs Center EL Civics 2011–2013

This visual illustrates the components of a unit related to crime and community safety from St. Paul Public Schools' *Using English* curriculum. Each unit culminates in a product or project that learners create.

A line of inquiry such as the one in this example makes space in our instruction for asking critical and engaging questions and provides a high level of interaction and many opportunities for practicing academic language. Cultural inquiry is another type of line of inquiry. Although cultural inquiry can be about students in class, it can also mean understanding practices in educational or work settings. To learn more about the role of culture in teaching and learning English as a second language, see the LINCS ELL-U course on *The Role of Culture in the Education of Adult English Language Learners*.

?

TEACHERS ASK: *What's an example of a project that follows a line of inquiry?*
Each fall and winter, students are absent more often due to illness, which is frequently caused by a flu virus. The class researches how viruses are passed among people and how to prevent such an illness. Their research results in a group project that shares their findings (for example, frequent hand washing and preventative flu shots) in a brochure or poster, accompanied by a short presentation to another class on how they can keep the flu out of their classroom and families! In this example, not only are students reading and writing with purpose and real-life application, but they are also using a great deal of academic language, language strategies, critical thinking, and collaboration to achieve a shared goal.

CONCEPTS IN ACTION 2

These students in a St. Paul, Minnesota, ELA classroom engage in a hands-on group project during a unit on construction careers.

Teaching Through Projects to Meet Rigorous Language Demands

What Is It?

Meeting the language needs of today's learners is a challenging task for educators. In this section, we focus on one approach that can be used across the range of adult ELA contexts and at any level of instruction. In project-based learning (PBL), students gain knowledge and skills by working to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge. Described in Finn Miller's **CAELA brief** (2010), PBL has gained much attention as a powerful way to integrate many rigorous literacy and communication skills together with key content knowledge for ELLs (Duke, 2014).

PBL requires communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (Buck Institute for Education, **http://bie.org**). The content of the project can be related to learners' community participation, potential or current careers, high school equivalency subjects (e.g., math, social studies), and/or postsecondary subject areas such as history or botany. PBL is an engaging approach that demands academic language and prepares learners for postsecondary and career transitions. In addition, PBL is one way to design instruction along a challenging and engaging line of inquiry, as described in the previous **section**.

Interested in learning more about PBL? The **Buck Institute for Education** (BIE) offers videos, testimonials, publications, planning resources, online forums and courses, and more. BIE's long-standing, systematic approach to designing engaging learning via projects is both extensive and easily transferable to adult learning contexts. This **introductory video** is a good place to start.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD   Audio | Transcript
Mary Zamacona, a teacher and coordinator for the Minnesota Literacy Council in St. Paul, Minnesota, describes how project-based learning can help students achieve transitions and college and career readiness skills.

TAKE A TIP: PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION
Professor Nell Duke of the University of Michigan has written extensively about project-based instruction and its use in developing powerful readers and writers. Dr. Duke provides downloadable project-planning templates, assessment tools, and links to additional resources here. Dr. Duke's publications emphasize short-term research projects that build knowledge via informational texts and collaborative learning, elements that easily transfer to adult learning contexts.

Key Consideration: What is the connection between PBL and meeting rigorous language demands in adult ELA?

Some project-based learning units continue over several weeks, such as this example from a high-beginning/low-intermediate class. In this extensive project (planned for 16 hours of instruction), students make videos about a community garden on the grounds of their school that they designed, planted, tended, and are now harvesting. (See a brief video describing the larger Community Garden work **here**.) Their final product is a 2–3 minute video that provides a tour of the garden and an explanation of how to cook one vegetable. As students plan and create their videos, they work to reach college and career readiness standards as well as employability skills (while this specific lesson uses the **Transitions Integration Framework** from Minnesota, an additional employability skills framework from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education [OCTAE] can be found **here**).

This garden movie project, created by Mary Zamacona of the Minnesota Literacy Council, has been written up in detail with accompanying assessment rubrics and supporting materials, all of which can be accessed **here**. A brief snapshot of this garden movie project is provided on the next page, with links to examples of students' final videos. Also included is the storyboard students completed in preparation for filming to illustrate the content and steps in creating their films. Key speaking and listening standards and the key employability skills embedded into this PBL unit are listed.

Providing effective formative assessment and feedback to students helps teachers to support student comprehension and learning. This is especially important as additional rigor is built into the classroom and embedded into student projects. To learn more, see the LINCS ELL-U Course on *Formative Assessment to Inform Quality Adult ESL Instruction*.
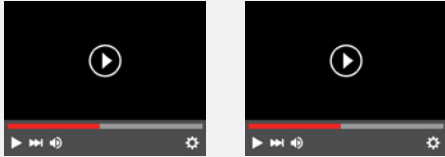

This student is part of a community garden project at a Minnesota Literacy Council learning center. The yearly garden project provides ample opportunities to boost students' language, literacy, and employability skills in hands-on, collaborative ways.

In addition to working directly in the garden, students enter data related to the project into collaborative Google docs to track the garden's progress.

★ **TAKE A TIP: TRANSITIONS INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK (TIF)**
See more about the Transitions Integration Framework (TIF) used in Minnesota adult education **here** (ATLAS, 2013). This framework outlines eight categories of hard-to-define, yet make-or-break skills students need to successfully transition into college, careers, and deeper community involvement. The TIF is also referred to in the *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways: Companion Learning Resource* on the **LINCS ESL Pro landing page**.

Garden Movie Project

Final Product of this Garden Movie Project Unit:
a 2–3 minute video giving a tour of the school garden and instructions for how to cook one food item. Students use iPads to record each other.

Number of Sessions: 16 (one hour each)

Purpose: Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the garden using digital technology.

Audience: The public, other learners, stakeholders, educators

Examples of students' final movies (Summary) created in this unit:*

Key college and career readiness standards reached with this movie project:

CCRS

Speaking & Listening 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.

(4b): 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.

Speaking & Listening 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

(5d): Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Key Employability Skills (from Transitions Integration Framework)

Effective Communication 3: Utilize a variety of technologies for communication.

3a: Evaluate and use appropriate technology tools for clear and meaningful communication to suit the audience.

Self-Management 2: Manage information and materials for one's own learning and goals.

3: Manage time effectively to complete tasks.

Critical Thinking 1: Organize, analyze, and illustrate relationships between components, items, and ideas.

(1a): Sequence components, items, or ideas in a logical or structured manner.

2: Solve problems.

(2e): Identify, prioritize, and apply steps to solve problems.

> What additional employability skills are addressed in this PBL unit (e.g., use of technology)?

SIMPLE STORYBOARD

Title of Video:
Group Name: Group Members:

Script
What do you say?
Time

1. Introduction: Welcome to the garden
2. Show and name the vegetables in English. Does it grow in your country?
3. Explain how to cook vegetable 1
4. Closing: Say why garden is important for the school and thank you.

> What academic language and language strategies are required to complete the story board and the actual filming

* These examples of "end products" of this project provide a sense of students' language levels as well as the skills involved in making the short movies.

Key Consideration: How can PBL work within the realities of adult education, such as open enrollment, shared space, limited funding for supplies, and limited paid prep time for teachers?

Some projects, such as the garden video project described on **pages 14–15**, are extensive and require much planning and multiple weeks to complete. Although highly beneficial for learners, some projects may not be easy to realize in many adult education settings with limited class time and prep time, fluctuating attendance, and scarce funds. However, projects can also be very small in scale and take place within a single lesson.

The lesson below is from a low-intermediate ELA class studying greetings and gestures. This simple lesson included a group project to create a poster of greetings in students' home languages and a brief oral presentation to the class. The focus here was on effective communication, a critical skill for college, careers, and community involvement. The lesson is taken from a full employability framework available **here**. You can see the full set of beginning, intermediate, and advanced lesson plans and supporting materials **here** and link to a classroom video of this lesson **here**.

Let's take a look at this effective communication lesson and the **transition skills** it addresses. The call-out boxes indicate the transition skills and subskills emphasized.

Effective Communication Lesson

Engage positively and actively in team settings to accomplish goals.
- **Seek and offer clarification in spoken communication.**
- **Repair communication breakdowns respectfully and effectively.**
- **Acknowledge and affirm others and their contributions.**
- **Participate, make contributions, and encourage the contributions of others in order to accomplish the shared goal of a team.**

A video of this full lesson is available **here**, and complete write-ups of this lesson plan differentiated for beginning, intermediate, and advanced adult ELLs are available **here**.

1. In a small group, students distinguish between greetings and gestures and talk about cultural norms, prompted by questions on a handout:
   - What words do you say when you see someone you know?
   - What do these words mean in English?
   - What words do you say when you meet a new person in your country?
   - What do these words mean in English?
   - What do you do with your body when you "greet" someone?
   - What do you do with your body when you "meet" someone for the first time

2. Teacher prompts students to use clarifying questions during the discussion: *Can you repeat that? How do you spell that? Say that again, please?*

3. Students complete a team project by creating a poster with examples of their home countries' greetings and gestures. These are the instructions given to learners:

   Your teacher will give your group a large piece of paper. On this paper, everyone will:
   - *Write the words they use to greet someone.*
   - *Write the words they use to meet someone.*
   - *Draw a picture of what they do with their body when they greet someone.*
   - *Draw a picture of what they do with their body when they meet someone.*
   - *Share their greeting with the class.*

4. Teacher prompts students to use interactive language during their teamwork: *What about you? What do you say in your language? Do you want to _____?* and so forth.

Use language style, level of formality, and nonverbal cues, appropriate to context and task, in oral and written communication.
- **Recognize meaning of gestures and body language in a particular context and use appropriately.**
- **Choose appropriate register (level of formality) for audience, purpose, and communication type.**

PBL has gained much attention as a means of including rigorous language demands in engaging, meaningful lessons. For more information about small-scale projects and to access examples of project-planning templates and additional PBL resources, see Dr. Nell Duke's **website** at the University of Michigan.

TEACHERS ASK: *How can PBL happen in a multilevel class?*

Jayme Adelson-Goldstein (2015) responds: Project-based learning provides a basis for differentiated instruction while giving learners—at varying levels of proficiency—the impetus to work together toward a common goal. This makes it ideal for multilevel classes! Learners play a variety of roles in the development of the project, and their diverse needs can be addressed through the different tasks that are part of the project. Consider one fairly common class project—creating a directory of community (or school) services for newcomers. (The resulting directory can be as simple as a single page with key information or as grand as a bound handbook.) To create the directory, learners would need to survey classmates and others to determine the types of services needed; research and organize the contact information (including websites) for these services; interview local business owners and others in the community for their advice to newcomers; and design, assemble, or distribute the directory. While some of these tasks are well suited for beginners (organizing phone numbers, addresses, and websites), intermediate learners could be tasked with creating the needs survey, and advanced learners could conduct informational interviews with local services. There would also be tasks that cross-ability teams could tackle (e.g., conceiving, designing, and distributing the directory). The final presentation of the product is a whole-class affair, with learners across levels taking pride in their product and the skills they've developed.
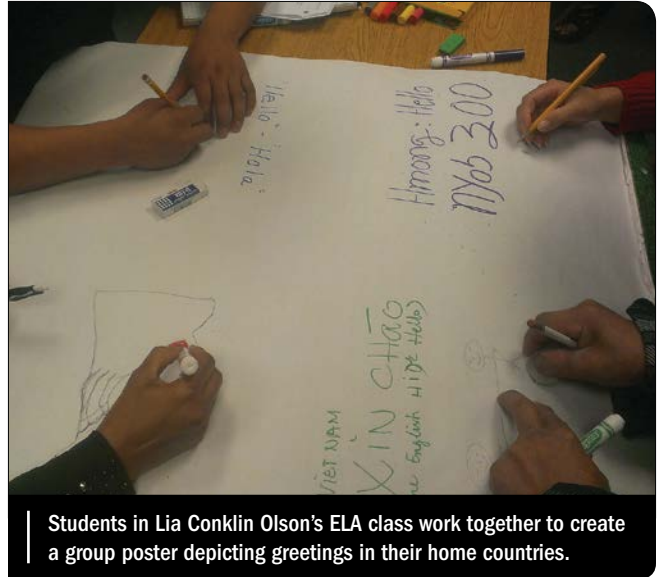
Students in Lia Conklin Olson's ELA class work together to create a group poster depicting greetings in their home countries.

In the final three Concepts in Action (Accessing Complex Informational Texts, Employing Evidence in Speaking and Writing, and Building Content Knowledge), we continue exploring rigorous ELA instruction while branching into a critical area for adult ELLs: *literacy development*. Current driving forces in the field of adult education are shifting our understanding of what college and career readiness literacy skills look like. For example, commonly accepted high school equivalency measures (such as GED, Hi-Set, and TASC) ask students to access complex informational texts and to show evidence to support their claims in writing. Additionally, the 2014 federal **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** (WIOA) emphasizes the use of rigorous standards as well as the instruction of language skills for workplace preparation. The ability to access complex texts is a cornerstone of success in workplaces as well as in academic settings, as are writing and speaking using evidence from such texts. Improving reading and the ability to respond thoughtfully to complex texts require all the **elements of rigorous instruction**: strong language strategies, academic language, and critical thinking skills. Much is being asked of adult ELA instructors today, and the following three Concepts in Action work to demystify the *literacy* teaching and learning needed for today's adult ELLs.

Why such a focus on reading?
Research has shown that the complexity of text that students can read independently is the greatest predictor of success in college (**ACT, 2006**). In addition, even for students who are not college bound, the level of reading required in today's workplaces and in daily life in our communities has been shown to be well above what is typically taught in secondary schools (**Williamson, 2006**). Preparing adult ELLs for today's world means we must prepare them to read complex texts closely, use evidence to support claims, and learn challenging content via informational texts.

★ TAKE A TIP: LITERACY AND CONTENT STANDARDS
Interested in exploring more resources, videos, and materials related to these literacy topics? EngageNY is a website developed and maintained by the New York State Education Department that provides current materials and resources for teachers. You can find it on the LINCS Collection **here** or link directly **here**.

CONCEPTS IN ACTION 3

Engaging with complex texts in ELA class is important preparation for the language demands of today's workplaces, colleges, and communities.

Accessing Complex Informational Texts

Key Considerations: What is close reading and what makes a text complex? How can we let students "struggle" with texts productively while still providing the support they need?

Close reading means re-reading and digging deeply into a text to determine what the author is truly saying. In order to read something closely, it must be a text worth reading in the first place! It's important that texts be engaging, worth talking and writing about, and sufficiently complex for adult ELLs.

What makes a text complex? Texts may be considered complex for many reasons, including the presence of elements such as

- Complex sentences
- Uncommon vocabulary
- Lack of words, sentences, or paragraphs that review or pull things together
- Lengthy paragraphs
- Text structure that is less narrative or that mixes structures
- Subtle and/or frequent transitions
- Multiple and/or subtle themes and purposes
- Dense information
- Unfamiliar settings, topics, or events
- Lack of repetition, overlap, or similarity in words and sentences

⭐ TAKE A TIP: CLOSE READING

Interested in learning more about close reading? The Achieve the Core **website**, also linked through LINCS **here**, is a great place to start. It offers lesson plans, videos, professional development modules, and resources to develop the skills needed for close reading. Also, watch this **introductory video** (**Summary**) from a teacher describing close reading. And to see a close reading lesson in action, click **here** (**Summary**).

⭐ TAKE A TIP: STRATEGIES FOR ACCESSING COMPLEX TEXTS

Interested in learning more about this topic? The LINCS ESL Pro online course, *Meeting the Language Needs of Today's Adult English Learner*, Module 1, Unit 3, focuses on the development of strategies for accessing both print and oral texts. Also, see **here** for more detail and professional development modules on text complexity, employing evidence, and building content knowledge from OCTAE. You might also consider joining the **LINCS College and Career Readiness online community** to network with others doing similar work.

It is vital that students spend some of their time in adult ELA classes engaging with complex texts, even though it is challenging. Academic vocabulary can be learned from close reading, and the academic language and literacy skills needed for success in college and careers can be gained only by working with demanding materials. Students cannot be adequately prepared for transitioning into postsecondary or career training options by only reading simplified texts with restricted, limited, or thin meaning.

There are a number of helpful strategies that teachers can use to help adult learners access complex texts. However, it is important to remember not to scaffold to such an extent that the students don't need to engage with the text closely in order to complete classroom tasks. Learners need to spend some time in a "productive struggle" with texts, mirroring the reality of reading such texts independently in their daily lives outside of the classroom.

In an intermediate ELA class, students are reading about a restaurant in San Francisco that is owned by two deaf business people. The full text (at various reading levels) can be accessed **here** for free, although an account registration is required. In the table to the right, several scaffolding techniques are described that create access to the restaurant text and demonstrate how students can engage with such texts in demanding yet supported ways. Several of the techniques that Professor Betsy Parrish recommends in her *Voices From the Field* audio segment are in action here.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD
Audio | Transcript
Betsy Parrish, an ESL professor at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, describes a variety of instructional techniques that lead learners to better comprehension of complex texts.

Note: In the following examples, the lexile 710 version of the text is the one referred to, which corresponds to a CCRS Level B reading. However, these scaffolding techniques would work at any reading level for which this text is available.

Creating Access to a Complex Text for Adult ELLs

Type of scaffold to complex text:	Specific classroom example of teacher action that supports access to this specific complex text:
What is an instructional technique that leads learners to more comprehension, more learning, and more independence in reading this text?	*Despite Obstacles, Deaf Business Owners Mean Business, 11/18/15*
Activate background knowledge by cueing students into visuals and other text features on the page, such as titles and headings.	*Read the caption below the photograph.* On the board, teacher writes: "deaf" and "business owner" and circles each term. She models a **mind map** task by writing the words the students offered about these words. *What do you know about deaf people? What do you know about owning a business?* Teacher writes down the words they offer on the board to complete the mind map about the key ideas from the caption.
"Chunk a text," that is, allow students to digest part of the text for basic comprehension, talk to each other to process what's been said, and then continue. After previewing the entire text quickly so that students have a general sense of where the text is headed, direct students to a specific section to re-read more closely.	After reading through the entire text briefly, students are directed to the section *Equal Ambition and Ability* and are asked to re-read. When finished, she asks students to talk to a partner and share what the text says about Gallaudet University and studying business. *Stay with the text here. What does it say about the Gallaudet and business students?*
Use graphic organizers to help students unpack a challenging text and keep ideas organized.	Students are directed to the word "obstacle" in the title. If needed the teacher simply provides the definition of "obstacle." In a graphic organizer (see example on the next page), students are asked to complete a graphic organizer listing *Obstacles for Deaf Business Owners* and *Solutions*.
Encourage academic conversations among students that direct them back to the text and to each other. In other words, create a class culture where students interact with others in class to talk about the text.	As students are working on the graphic organizer, the teacher directs them to several familiar prompts on the wall that they have used in previous classes: *Can you show me where that is in the text?* *How do you know...* *What tells you...* *Why....* *I wonder if the author is saying...because I see...* *What do you think?* *Can you say more about that?* *Can you show me an example of what you mean?*

Graphic Organizer

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED BY THE DEAF BUSINESS OWNERS	SOLUTIONS
→	

More examples of lessons and supporting materials that assist adult ELLs in accessing complex texts can be found in the Open Educational Resource (OER) reviews among the LINCS ESL Pro suite of products. OER are teaching and learning materials teachers may freely use and reuse at no cost. Unlike fixed, copyrighted resources, OER have been authored or created by an individual or organization that chooses to retain few, if any, ownership rights. The OER Commons website (**https://www.oercommons.org/**) is the vast clearinghouse for these resources. Visit the **LINCS ESL Pro program page** for an introduction to a collection of more than 60 OER which practitioners reviewed for the LINCS ESL Pro initiative. Particular OER examples related to accessing complex text include an OER for teaching text structure (**Turngren, 2014b**), and an OER that focuses on identifying the author's purpose (**Turngren, 2014a**).

? TEACHERS ASK: *How can we do close reading with low-level adult ELLs whose English vocabulary is still quite limited?*
Because we are teachers of both language and literacy, we need to prioritize our limited time with students. Close reading may only be a very small part of what we do in class with lower level adult ELLs. Even so, we can teach phrases such as "the author says" and "I see in the text that…," which direct students back to the text and acquaint them with this relationship with the text as the expert in the room. We can also begin introducing the idea of evidence even when reading skills are still limited. For example, students can look at a photograph and be asked, "How do you think he is feeling? What makes you say that? What in the photo makes you think he is sad?" This begins the journey of looking repeatedly at a text and seeing it as an important source of information for learning.

Students who struggle greatly to read texts within (or even below) their text complexity must be given the support needed to enable them to read at an appropriate level of complexity. Even many students on course for college and career readiness are likely to need scaffolding as they master higher levels of text complexity. (CCSS, Appendix A, p. 9, **www.corestandards.org**)

CONCEPTS IN ACTION 4

Students increase their academic literacy by regularly engaging with high-quality, complex texts and by puzzling with text-based questions worth answering.

Employing Evidence in Speaking and Writing

Key Consideration: What does using evidence from informational texts look like for adult ELA in and out of the classroom?

The ability to read an informational text closely and draw conclusions based on evidence differentiates strong students from weak students on national assessments (ACT, 2006). This skill is not only present in college coursework, but it is also something we do as citizens and workers all the time. Consider these daily life examples:

1. In a student's workplace, an email goes out to all employees requiring them to sign up for training on a new piece of equipment. The email offers several time slots for the training, and employees must register online for two consecutive sessions. To respond, the student must understand the sender's role and the training requirement, and then the student must compare the available time slots to his or her work schedule and prior commitments before signing up online. This requires close reading and making decisions based on multiple texts (the original email and his or her work and personal schedules) as well as digital literacy skills. If the student has questions or a conflict with the training times, he or she needs to be able to interact with a coworker or supervisor, refer to the email, and problem solve in order to meet the employer's requirement.

2. A parent in an adult ELA class receives an email from her daughter's school principal. The email explains that the child's teacher is going on medical leave for two months and will be replaced by a substitute. The parent has many questions and would like to understand who will be teaching her daughter for the next several weeks and prepare the child for this change. To do this, the parent must understand the sender of the email and the content, formulate clear questions, and respond in an appropriate register to the principal, perhaps asking for a time to meet. This requires close reading of the initial email, creating questions based on this information, and responding via email, using polite language. The parent may also wish to set a meeting with the principal or the substitute teacher to clarify the situation, which will

VOICES FROM THE FIELD   Audio | Transcript
Lia Conklin Olson, an ESL teacher at the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning in St. Paul, Minnesota, speaking on the importance of emphasizing using text evidence for learners.

require referring to the text of the email as well as strong speaking and listening skills.

When we are focusing on guiding our students to "use evidence" when speaking and writing, we must ask questions of texts that do just that! **Text-dependent questions** are different from comprehension check questions we might traditionally have asked language learners about a reading. See the box below for some examples of how text-dependent questions are distinct from other types of questions.

For example, considering the *Despite Obstacles* text, take a look at a text-dependent question versus a non-text-dependent question.

Text-Dependent Questions. This sentence appears in the text: "Deaf people have the same ambition and ability to own their own businesses as those who hear." Find a sentence in the text that shows that the deaf business owners have the *ability* to run a restaurant. Now find a sentence in the text that shows that the deaf business owners have *ambition*.

Non-Text-Dependent Questions. These business owners overcame an obstacle to become successful. What obstacle have you overcome in your lifetime to achieve a goal?

★ TAKE A TIP: READING-LEVEL-ALIGNED COMPLEX TEXTS

The ReadWorks **website**, also linked **here**, provides teachers with reading-level-aligned complex literary and informational texts on a variety of topics. Many reading passages are accompanied by text-dependent questions, student vocabulary worksheets, and teacher notes.

? TEACHERS ASK: *I understand about text-dependent questions, but does this mean we aren't supposed to have students talk and write about their own life experiences anymore?*

As adult ELA instructors, we wear many hats! Three of those hats are "language teacher," "cultural and community liaison," and "literacy teacher." We are tasked with building language in our students, helping them navigate their communities, and helping them to adjust to life in the United States. In doing so, we need them to share their goals and life experiences with us, just as we share our insights and expertise with them. There are times, however, when we need to don our "literacy teacher" hats and help students get used to handling the challenging reading and writing tasks they will encounter in "whatever's next" in their lives, be it a high school equivalency class, a career training course, postsecondary education, a better job, or deeper community involvement. During literacy-focused time, part of our work is to teach close reading and direct students' attention to the text, allowing the text to be the giver of information and the authority in the room. It's all about balance—not every reading lesson will be a close reading lesson. But the clearer we can be to ourselves about what each lesson is intended to achieve, the clearer the lesson will be to the learners.


What are some characteristics of text-dependent questions?	- Push students to rely solely on the text for insight and analysis - Require reliance on the language and mechanics of the text itself, rather than personal experience or opinion - Probe the specifics of the text and avoid "canned" questions that could be asked of any text - Identify the text as the "expert" in the room

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Let's look at an additional example of using evidence from an informational text for speaking and writing. It is important to note that questions should be sequenced to allow for general comprehension first, before leading to more substantive and challenging questions that may require more inference and background knowledge to answer. This example would come later in the lesson, when students were already familiar with the *Despite Obstacles* text.

Ask questions worth answering! Sequence questions to allow for general comprehension first with plenty of support, but then move on to substantive, interesting, discussion-worthy topics for a more lengthy discussion.	After the *Despite Obstacles* text has been read and re-read and students have talked with each other as they completed the graphic organizer described in the previous section, the teacher points out this line from the text and writes it on the board for the class to contemplate: *"The hearing world is still not used to the idea of deaf business owners."* *First, what evidence in the text shows that this statement is true? Second, what evidence in the text shows that "the hearing world" might be changing how they think about businesses owned by deaf people?* Students talk with each other about these challenging questions, sometimes in their first languages, looking to the text for clues. They refer to the graphic organizer and other tasks they did prior to this writing prompt for ideas. Then they are directed to write a few sentences to answer this question, citing specific ideas from the text

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When students speak and write about a substantive question like the one above, they must dig deeply into the text and think critically about what the author is saying. Such skills are essential for success in postsecondary education, in the workplace, and in fully participating as citizens in our communities.

CONCEPTS IN ACTION 5
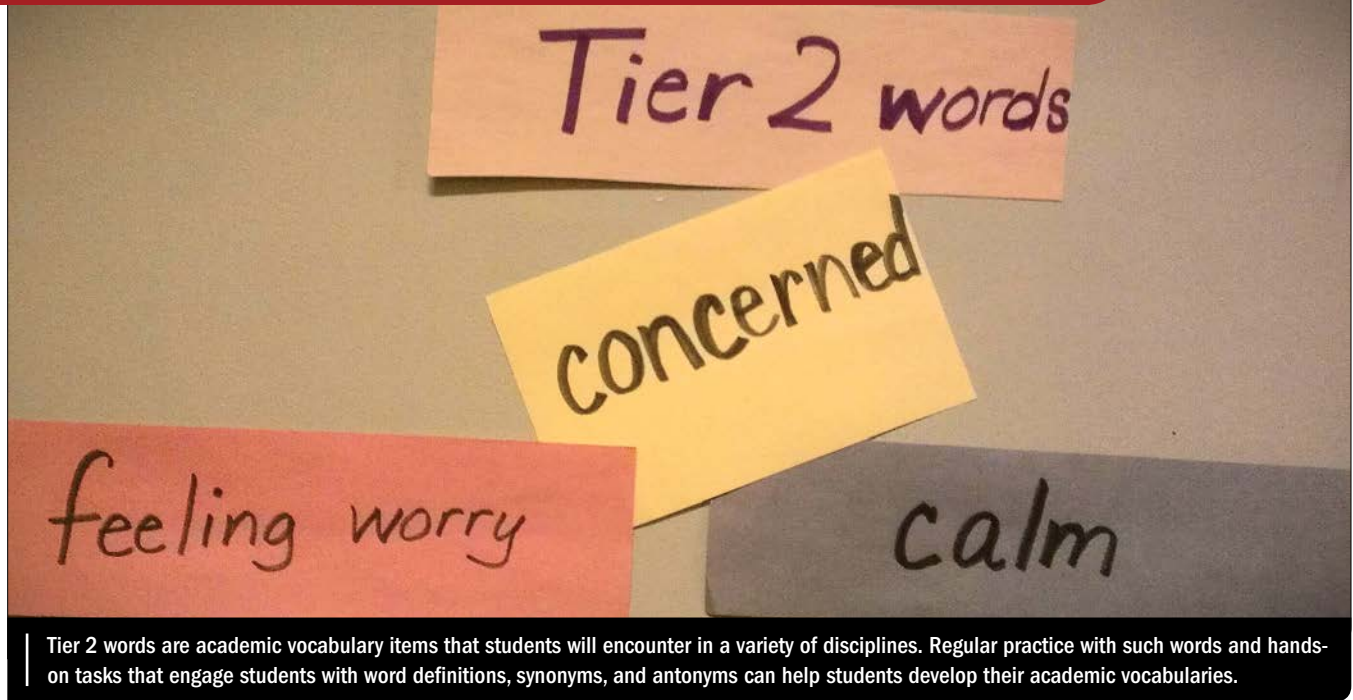
Tier 2 words are academic vocabulary items that students will encounter in a variety of disciplines. Regular practice with such words and hands-on tasks that engage students with word definitions, synonyms, and antonyms can help students develop their academic vocabularies.

Building Content Knowledge

Key Consideration: How can we teach language and literacy while also building content knowledge?

Adult ELA can be taught in integrated courses that build content knowledge while improving language and literacy skills. Such **integrated instruction** combines both language and academic content for high school equivalency, college, or careers. When it comes to what students are reading, texts that relate to the content at hand and ideally to a particular line of inquiry are chosen, such as a community engagement question, or an essential question related to science, social studies, or a specific career pathway like nursing or manufacturing. For much more on integrating ELA and career pathways, see the suite of LINCS ESL Pro materials developed **here**. As language teachers, we bring the vital know-how to support the language demands of these challenging teaching and learning contexts. Our colleagues in Career and Technical Education have much expertise to offer in integrating academic and technical content, and this **publication** outlines such innovative curricula integration. To learn more about project-based instruction for science teaching in particular, take a look at this online course, *Project-Based Science Instruction for*

Career Preparation, available via **LINCS**. Also, the Achieve the Core **website** provides lessons organized around text sets and specific ideas for increasing the volume of reading and building student knowledge for a number of different topics of interest to adult ELLs. Adult ELA students are not typically in adult education classes for long. When instruction integrates building content knowledge with academic language and literacy development, we can do much to maximize their time!

One cornerstone of building content knowledge is the ability to learn via informational texts. In the example on the next page, pre-nursing assistant certification students are working on an ethics unit: *How can nursing assistants conduct themselves ethically.*

★ TAKE A TIP: CONTEXTUALIZING INSTRUCTION
To learn more about contextualized adult education, visit the **LINCS ESL Pro landing page** and the suite of materials on *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways*. Also, **LaGuardia Community College** has resources related to integrating career and academic content.

🔊 VOICES FROM THE FIELD   Audio | Transcript
Gayle Zoffer of the International Institute of Minnesota in St. Paul, speaking about integrating content, language, and literacy instruction to maximize students' progress toward their goals.

Early in the unit, students do a close reading of an article on the ethics of being a nursing assistant and then pull out and reflect on eight key areas of nursing assistant ethics (see Eight Areas box below). Students also do some focused vocabulary work (see example with "negligence" below). Throughout the unit, they do additional comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary-building tasks; role-play activities; and then they complete a set of group discussion and writing questions later in the unit as a review (see discussion questions below).

WORD	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
negligence (noun)	Not providing normal care or attention to something.	*Not testing the water temperature before you put a baby into the bathtub is an example of <u>negligence</u>.*
RELATED WORD	NURSING ASSISTANT EXAMPLE	MY NOTES
Related words: Synonym: Opposite:		

Eight Areas of Nursing Assistant Ethics

1. Save lives.
2. Give safe care.
3. Do what you know how to do.
4. Respect the residents.
5. Don't accept tips.
6. Respect confidentiality.
7. Be dependable.
8. Report abuse.

Discussion: Work with your team to come up with an answer to each question.

1. What is an example of verbal abuse?
2. What is an example of negligence?
3. A nursing assistant enters a patient's room while she is at lunch and looks in the patient's dresser. What category of ethics is being ignored?
4. A resident starts yelling at you while you are giving her a bath. What do you say?
5. A nursing assistant from another floor of the facility asks you why a resident from your floor went to the hospital in the middle of the night. Can you share that information?

★ **TAKE A TIP: ACADEMIC "VOCABULARY WORKOUT" RESOURCES**
Follow this **link** for a set of academic Vocabulary Workouts similar to the example above with the word "negligence."

★ **TAKE A TIP: CONNECTIONS AMONG TEXT COMPLEXITY, LINES OF INQUIRY, AND KNOWLEDGE**

What's the connection between close reading of complex texts, organizing instruction around a line of inquiry, and building knowledge? Engaging students in small online research projects about the topic at hand is a great way to read texts worth reading and to build knowledge, all while working on digital literacy, critical thinking, and close reading skills. For example, within a unit using the line of inquiry, "How can I keep my family healthy?", students can read an introductory article on fitness together closely, guided by the instructor. Then they can be directed to **www.procon.org** to read materials on the obesity controversy in the United States, as well as First Lady Obama's initiative on childhood obesity, **www.letsmove.gov**. Using these resources (and additional print or digital resources), students can work together in teams to draw conclusions about how to avoid obesity and present the conclusions to the class. (See *Integrating Digital Literacy Into English Language Instruction: Issue Brief*, "Solving Problems in Technology-Rich Environments," for information about helping learners conduct research and make wise decisions about online information they gather and use for writing. Also, see the *Meeting the Language Needs of Today's Adult English Language Learner: Professional Development Module 1*, Unit 3 for more on creating listening lessons using online sources, with an emphasis on synthesizing information from multiple sources.

In this unit example, we see students learning nursing-related content from a text they have read closely, and then they focus on specific academic language before moving into a culminating discussion and writing work. Throughout this rigorous unit on nursing assistant ethics, they engage with a relevant line of inquiry, read and learn from worthwhile content-related texts, focus on academic language skills, think critically, engage in academic conversations, and show their knowledge through speaking and writing tasks. The instruction integrates the content of nursing with academic language and literacy development. However, it should be noted that this rich topic would engage learners in *any* ELA class, not just a pre-nursing certification class.

Building content knowledge can, but does not have to, build toward knowledge of a particular vocation. A general skills ELA class also works to build general cultural content knowledge for learners schooled in other countries. An excellent place to begin browsing resources on rich topics is the **Open Educational Resource (OER) Commons**, described in more detail on **page 20**. Of particular interest is the collection of more than 60 OER reviews that were created and vetted as part of the **LINCS ESL Pro** suite of resources. To create this collection, adult ELA professionals from across the country found and evaluated several OER that lend themselves to building content knowledge. One example is a unit on the Civil Rights movement for beginning ELA (Folkes, 2015b), posted at **https://www.oercommons.org/authoring/6834-the-montgomery-bus-boycott-for-beginning-adult-eso**. For higher levels, this lesson on *Teaching Ferguson to Adult English Language Learners* (Folkes, 2015a) is shared.

Conclusion

Today's adult ELLs are navigating a complex world. They have many varying goals in their roles as family members, workers, and citizens. To prepare them for the increasing language demands of careers, college, and community involvement, ELA teachers can and must up the rigor of classroom instruction. The ideas provided in this Companion Learning Resource are in no way exhaustive, but they provide a place to begin exploring these critical topics in the field today. Consider choosing a tip or idea from this Resource to try with your students, and share your response with a colleague!

By increasing the rigor of English instruction, students can be better prepared for what's next in their lives.

RESOURCE INDEX

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GLOSSARY

The following terms are used in this RESOURCE. Click on the glossary term to return to the page you were reading.

Academic Language: The language needed for success at work and school and for full engagement in the community. It works at the discourse level (recognizing text structure, transitions), sentence level (complex verb tenses, long noun phrases), and word level and is the language common in work and school documents and in more formal interactions. (Pages 3–8, 10–13, 15, 17, 19, 23–25)

Content Knowledge: The subject matter being taught in addition to language in adult ELA classrooms (such as life skills for new arrivals, a topic related to community engagement, science, social studies, or specific career pathway). (Pages 6, 13, 17–18, 23–24)

Content Standards: Standards that explain what a student should be able to do upon successful completion of a course of study. Content standards are used to plan instruction and offer a common language and vision for adult educators and other stakeholders. (Pages 4, 17)

Critical Thinking: The process of actively conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to make decisions or take actions. (Pages 2–6, 8, 11–13, 15, 17, 24)

Graphic Organizer: A visual representation of information that shows the relationship between ideas (such as a Venn diagram to compare and contrast ideas). (Pages 10, 19, 22)

Integrated Instruction: An approach to teaching language through career-focused content (e.g., content from health care, construction, or service industries). Learners acquire language and skills needed for a specific career pathway. (Page 23)

Language Strategies: Intentional and active practices used to access oral and written texts. Strategies vary depending on the purposes for listening or reading, such as determining the main idea versus listening or reading for details. (Pages 5–6, 10–12, 15, 17)

Learner Engagement: When students are meaningfully engaged in instruction, generally due to authentic interaction and instruction that connects to real-world problems and is cognitively complex and collaborative in nature. (Pages 3, 7, 10)

Line of Inquiry: A way to organize instruction that allows students to explore a topic more fully than a traditional thematic approach. In a line of inquiry, there is a meaningful real-world application and often a problem to be solved. (Pages 11–13, 23–25)

Mind Map: A graphical way to represent ideas and concepts, often used in brainstorming tasks as a visual thinking tool in the classroom. After placing a key word or idea in the center of a page, students then generate words and ideas that come to mind in relation to it. (Page 19)
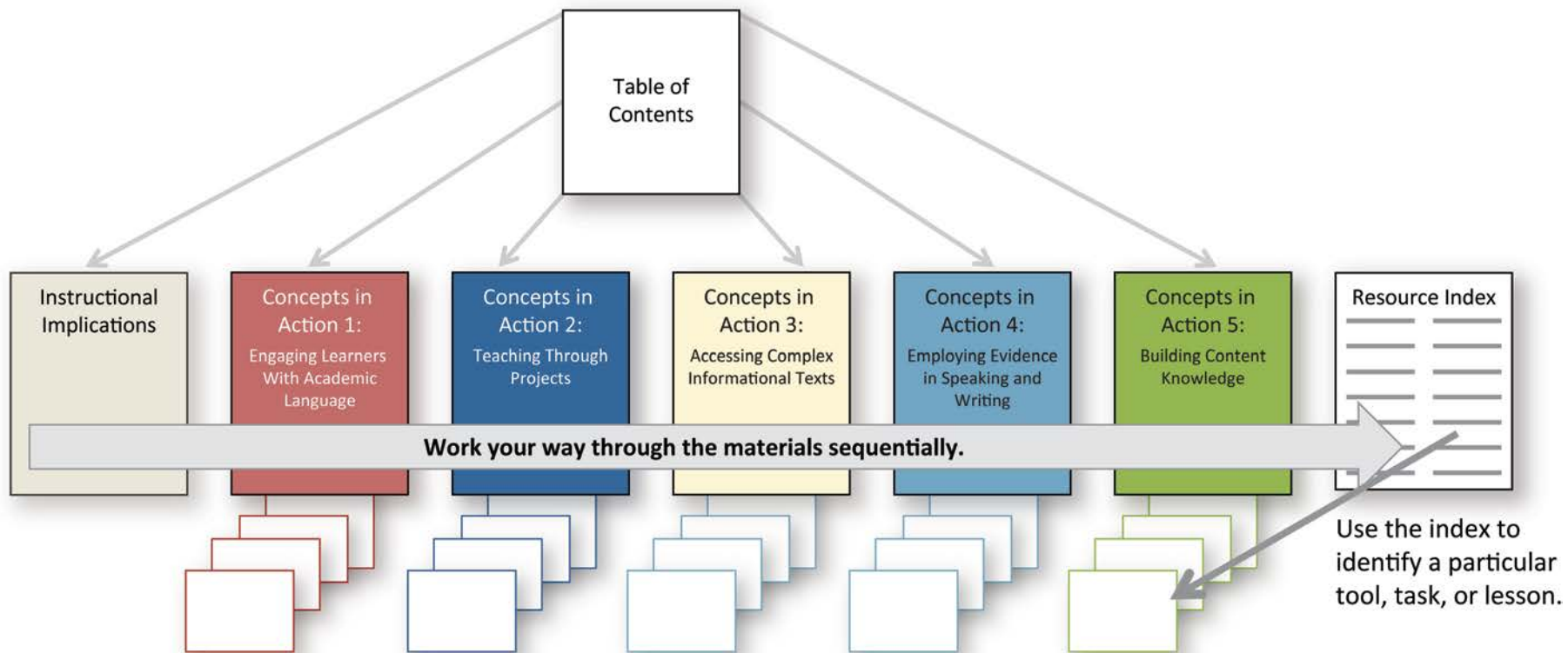
Project-Based Learning: An approach to instruction where students investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge and create a tangible product at the end of a unit of study. In doing so, students communicate, collaborate, and think critically and creatively. (Pages 6, 13, 14, 17, 19)

Rigorous Instruction: Instruction that moves beyond basic skills and prepares learners for the language and digital demands of today's world. Rigorous instruction includes a focus on academic language, language strategies, and critical thinking; it means having high expectations of all learners. (Pages 2, 5–6, 11, 17)

Text Complexity: A gauge of how challenging material is for a student at his or her specific reading or listening level. Three factors determine the complexity of a text: qualitative, quantitative, and those factors related to the actual reader and the task or purpose for reading the text. (Pages 5, 18, 20, 24)

Text-Dependent Questions: Questions about a text (a reading, listening, or visual text) that guide students to rely solely on the text for insight and analysis. Such questions do not privilege personal experience or opinion, and they identify the text as the "expert." (Page 22)

Transition Skills: Skills needed for academic and career readiness, including accessing complex reading and listening texts, taking notes and organizing information, critical thinking, and research skills. Traditionally thought of as skills taught only at advanced, pre-college levels, transition skills can and should be taught at all proficiency levels to prepare learners to successfully transition to new opportunities in their jobs and communities. (Page 16)

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Resource Index

Work your way through the materials sequentially.

Use the index to identify a particular tool, task, or lesson.

APPENDIX: PERMISSIONS

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p. 24: Nursing ethics lesson created by Gayle Zoffer, International Institute of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN. Used with permission.

p. 25: ELA students at Carlos Rosario School, Washington, DC. Used with permission.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

To return to the page you were reading, click "Back" at the bottom of the page.

Susan Finn Miller, a teacher and teacher educator in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, describes learner engagement.

What do we mean by learner engagement? Coates (2007) described learner engagement as "active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging…and enriching educational experiences, and feeling legitimated and supported" by the learning community. English learners will take the risks necessary to push their language development forward when they feel part of a supportive learning community. It's the teacher's job to create this safe space early on by involving students in various activities to get acquainted with one another.

We foster engagement when the content we teach is meaningful to the learners we serve and when we provide adequate support for students to engage with rigorous content, including the complex academic language that is integral. Recycling language through a variety of appealing tasks in speaking and listening as well as reading and writing will keep learners motivated.

Engaging lessons will include collaborative activities as part of every class. For example, beginners can work together to sequence a story using photos from a shared experience; they then take turns telling the story to one another, and the teacher transcribes the story to be used in a range of literacy lessons. Intermediate level learners might research two careers of interest and then collaborate on a Venn diagram to compare the careers. The learners then present their Venn diagrams to the class and write a paragraph comparing the two careers. Advanced students can work as part of a team to research a historical figure of their choice. They prepare a digital story about the individual to present to others and to feature on a class website.

Learners will be engaged when instruction is both rigorous and relevant and teachers strive for the right balance between challenging lesson content and the appropriate level of support.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Mary Zamacona, a teacher and coordinator for the Minnesota Literacy Council in St. Paul, Minnesota, describes how project-based learning can help students achieve transitions and college and career readiness skills.

When you design instruction around project-based learning, you're creating opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, complex work that has applications beyond the classroom, because the intended audience or a problem *is* outside the classroom. Projects run over a number of classes, which allow skills to build on each other and grow more complex over time. This is really a win-win. Students are highly engaged, and the teacher is able to include a variety of reading, and writing, speaking, listening, math, and technology skills. Real-world projects that investigate and report, or make movies to inform or improve a problem or a system—these projects reach across content standards, because content standards are based upon real-world skills.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Betsy Parrish, an ESL professor at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota, describes a variety of instructional techniques that lead learners to better comprehension of complex texts.

There are several ways that we can scaffold complex texts for adult ELLs.

It's important to build relevant background knowledge. This doesn't mean pre-teaching long lists of vocabulary or spending a lot of time on relating the topic to personal experiences. Adult ELLs often lack background knowledge and experience with topics found in work and school documents, so we can get learners to preview visuals, headings, and make some logical guesses about what they will learn from the text. We need to build background knowledge where there may be little to activate from prior experience.

We also need to provide opportunities for learners to talk about and interact with the text; a reading lesson should include conversations among class members, analyzing and interpreting the text.

We need to ask the right questions. Asking the right questions can lead adult ELLs to deeper thinking and analysis, as well as to a better understanding of how to find evidence in a text. Effective questions help learners collect the evidence they need to support their claims and make conclusions about what they are reading. Teachers must construct questions that depend on information that can be found in the text (*What tells you Ivan was disappointed in his son? versus Tell us a time you were disappointed in your son*.). To promote critical thinking and deeper analysis of a text in any lesson, avoid display questions with only one right answer. Ask *How do you know…, What tells you… Why….* These questions allow ELLs to demonstrate their understanding, rather than simply supply a one-word answer that can be found in the text. Asking such questions can promote the higher-order thinking skills of analysis and interpretation as opposed to simple recall and reporting.

We need to create tasks that help learners to recognize the organization of a text, and my favorite is the use of carefully chosen graphic organizers. Use graphic organizers as while-reading tasks along with informational texts. Have students fill in a grid with information as they read to practice information transfer and graphic literacy. Choose a graphic organizer that represents the text genre: a linear string for a chronological text, a flow chart for a text describing a process, or a grid for a text that describes categorization.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Lia Conklin Olson an ESL teacher at the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning in St. Paul, Minnesota, speaking on the importance of emphasizing using text evidence for learners.

I teach adult low-intermediate English language learners at an adult learning center. The College and Career Readiness Standards have given me the opportunity to become a better teacher and more effectively help my students move toward their goals. One of the instructional shifts I've focused on has been using text evidence. I can't say it's been easy to integrate or that I've figured out the best way to do it, but I can say that even with my initial tries the results I saw were unbelievable and they energized me to keep going and do better. For the first time, literally the first time in 15 years, I discovered how brilliant my students were. When I gave them the room and some tools to show me what they could do and how they could think on their own, they showed me their brilliance.

I know that sounds vague so let me explain more. By giving students complex text that included academic vocabulary and then helping them learn how to talk about the text with sentence frames, they were able to share deeper thoughts and ideas about relevant and complex situations and themes. The text-dependent questions I have been learning to create steer them to the text and demand that they engage with the text at a deeper level. When the text is meaningful and rich and the questions demand that they make meaning from the text, they are able to explore information in ways that enhance their learning and their knowledge base.

I believe it is this engagement with meaningful and rich text that gives my learners a chance to "own" new information. This "ownership" is power that is tangible in my classroom when it happens. I think that for the first time, my students are seeing themselves as influential, as being able to participate in deeper ways than they thought was possible before. This "productive struggle" with the text, enabled by questions that demand text evidence, provides this ownership and builds my students' confidence. It is definitely a ripple effect that starts within the classroom and extends into their lives and future endeavors.

This is why I feel using text evidence is so important for my students, *especially* at lower levels of ELL. Students begin to see themselves as influences in their communities, even if this first experience is within the walls of my classroom. I really feel this has been the case in my class. There are other more concrete examples of how using evidence has impacted my students' success in the realms of work readiness, community participation, and college and career. As students develop the habit of using evidence, they establish themselves as credible in whatever realm they enter. Others will listen more to what they say and respect them more for the evidence they use to support their claims. On the flipside, they begin to expect evidence from others which allows them to be more critical of the information they receive. This builds self-advocacy and helps protect them from exploitation.

Furthermore, they simply become better readers. They develop a more experimental stance when they read, interpreting and extracting meaning and developing a deeper relationship with the information. They know that only the text can provide the answers they are looking for so they more readily, from necessity, learn the vocabulary, skills, and strategies they need in order to get these answers. These learning skills and strategies become more and more developed as they are routinely engaged in using text evidence.

The impact of emphasizing using text evidence in the classroom has such a positive effect. I won't ever go back to my old way of teaching reading, and I'll never again limit my students' potential, based on their English level, for expressing their deep thoughts and ideas.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Gayle Zoffer of the International Institute of Minnesota in St. Paul speaking about integrating content, language, and literacy instruction to maximize students' progress toward their goals.

I teach an 11-week pre-Nursing Assistant class at the International Institute of Minnesota to high intermediate language learners who are seeking admission to our Nursing Assistant training program. These students need additional reading, listening, and speaking skills to succeed in passing the written exam and interview required for admission. Each week, students encounter a six-page textbook excerpt about a facet of the work environment or job duties of nursing assistants; topics include the structure of the United States health care system, safety in a nursing home setting, nursing assistant ethics, human body systems, and infection control.

This nursing assistant content provides the context for selecting each week's Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary words, our work on reading comprehension strategies, the content for conversational dialogues and pronunciation practice, our review of grammatical structures, and students' development of computer skills. Students might, for example, work on question formation in the present and past tenses in preparation for interviewing someone currently working as a Nursing Assistant about her experience in both the CNA training class and the workplace. A given week's vocabulary words provide the context for instruction about syllable division and syllable types, prefixes and suffixes, or pronouncing short versus long vowels.

I also work to equip students with the study, homework completion, and organizational skills that will be necessary to succeed in both the Nursing Assistant program and future college coursework.

VIDEO SUMMARIES

Disclaimer

Summaries are provided below for only those videos, originating from other public and private organizations,* that do not contain closed captioning. To return to the page you were reading, click "Back" at the end of each summary.

p. 7: *Growing Vocabulary With Beginning Learners*

Instructor Karli Boothe demonstrates a contextualized approach to introducing and reinforcing vocabulary within a beginning ESL lesson. She employs a range of vocabulary development strategies and activities that engage learners and promote interaction as they master words and concepts. **BACK**

p. 10: *How Much Are the Peppers?*

Segment 2—Reception Precedes Production: The teacher uses the Total Physical Response method to reinforce listening skills and vocabulary, and students practice asking questions before going to the farm by bus. On the bus two classes of students practice asking questions (cost of produce, etc.). At the farm, students pick and pay for their fruit, then sing a single-word song "Peppers" on their ride back to school. **BACK**

p. 10: *Building Literacy with Adult Emergent Readers*

Instructor Andrea Echelberger demonstrates a Whole-Part-Whole approach to teaching literacy, using a learner-generated story of a shared experience. Working with this story, she engages students in a wide variety of activities to develop their beginning literacy skills. **BACK**

p. 15: Two final student video

Student video on left: *School Vegetable Garden:* A student identifies each of the vegetables planted in the school garden. She lists garden ingredients for tomato soup, then explains how students worked with their teacher to create the school garden. **BACK**

Student video on right: *School Garden Tour:* A student identifies several of the vegetables planted in the Open Door school garden. She describes how to make a cucumber salad using garden ingredients. She explains what the students learned through this gardening project. **BACK**

p. 18: *How to do a Close Reading*

This video focuses on teaching students to examine language, narrative, syntax, and context while reading and also teaches them to re-read complex texts. **BACK**

p. 18: *Close Reading, Grade 10*

Students read a complex text closely. The instructor poses text-dependent questions and uses annotation and student discussions to develop students' understanding and thinking. **BACK**

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LINCS

Literacy Information and Communication System