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**Linking Research  
and Evaluation to  
Policy and  
Practice in Adult  
Education:  
Final Report**

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## **PART I: ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES**

# BUILDING PROGRAMMATIC SYSTEMS

## Introduction

**Overview of Study and Report.** As enrollments in beginning adult basic education (ABE) classes have risen over the past five years, ABE practitioners and state policymakers have been increasingly interested in learning about effective strategies for serving learners in these classes (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). While national studies have provided a general understanding of ABE services and the characteristics of adults participating in services, these studies have not systematically examined the types of instruction used in ABE programs, the outcomes from instruction, or the features of program operations that support effective instruction (St. Pierre et al., 1995; Young et al., 1994). Rather, the national studies as well as those examining services for subpopulations of learners--such as workplace literacy programs--have focused on describing aspects of program operations that appear to result in successful outcomes for learners (e.g., Alamprese, 1993; Kutner et al., 1991; Stein, 1991). Among the reasons for the lack of research on the relationship between program practices and learner outcomes has been the limited availability of learner outcome data and systematic methods for documenting program operations, particularly instruction.

In light of the sparse knowledge base about effective ABE programs and the emphasis on program accountability at the national and state levels, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a contract to Abt Associates Inc. in October 1995 to conduct an evaluation of effective ABE programs and practices for serving first-level learners. This study is designed to answer four critical questions about the practice of adult basic education:

- # What are the characteristics (program design and services) of effective ABE programs for first-level learners?
- # What are effective instructional approaches for the education of ABE learners that produce important learner outcomes?
- # What are the key features to consider in planning and implementing high-quality evaluations of ABE programs?
- # What resources do effective ABE programs need?

While the study is focused on first-level learners, it is expected that the information collected to address the study's questions will be of benefit to the ABE system as a whole. Given the lack of empirical data about the types of programs that facilitate positive outcomes for learners, this study will provide an initial knowledge base that can be further tested on practices serving different subpopulations of learners.

As part of its activities in the first phase of this study to identify effective organizational and instructional practices for serving first-level learners, Abt's research team conducted case studies of eight ABE programs and one program for at-risk youth that used a structured process for

teaching reading. This report presents case studies from the nine programs as well as an analysis of the aspects of program structure and operations, including instruction, which the administrators and staff in these programs believe are critical to providing quality services to learners.

**Study Phases.** In order to understand the organizational conditions and the instructional strategies that account for student learning in ABE programs, Abt's research team is undertaking a study that has two phases of activities:

- Design and Pilot Phase; and
- Strategy Evaluation Study.

*Design and Pilot Phase.* For the Design portion of this phase of the study (October 1995-December 1997), Abt's research team conducted a number of activities to define the subpopulation of learners that would be the focus of the study (described below), identify promising practices for serving first-level learners in adult basic education, and develop a framework for examining the relationship among program operations, instructional strategies, and learner outcome. The team reviewed the available literature on ABE programs and instruction for first-level learners and developed preliminary frameworks for instruction in reading and mathematics. They also conducted two phases of case studies of ABE programs to understand the operation of services and to identify promising practices. The first phase of visits to 11 programs, identified through nominations by the State Directors of Adult Education and others, provided information about the current state of practice of programs serving first-level learners. These programs tended to offer instruction in small groups or through one-on-one tutoring, used a variety of instructional methods and materials, and had limited use of learner assessment.

For the second phase of case studies, the research team selected eight programs that had evidence of learning gains by first-level learners and/or had instructors whom had been trained in a particular approach for teaching reading or math. A ninth program, which uses a specific reading process for instructing young adults, also was included as a case study site to understand the potential applications of this instructional method. These nine programs are the focus of this report.

During the Pilot portion of this study (January-July 1998), Abt's team has worked with four of the programs that were examined in the second phase of case studies in documenting the strategies that instructors use in teaching reading to first-level learners. The team also has reviewed learner intake and assessment data that these programs collect to make a preliminary determination of the progress that these learners make as a result of receiving services.

*Strategy Evaluation Study.* During this phase of the study, Abt's research team will test the relationship among ABE program operations, instructional strategies, and learner outcomes using an experimental design. The research team will work with the four programs that participated in the Pilot phase along with additional programs that use specific strategies in teaching reading to first-level learners in collecting data on learners' acquisition of reading skills, changes in self-esteem and self-efficacy, and social support networks. These programs will be compared to ABE

programs not using a specific instructional strategy. Depending on the results from the Strategy Evaluation, data on additional programs may be collected.

**Defining First-Level Learners.** One task in the Design and Pilot Phase of this study was to define the subpopulation of learners that would be the focus of the study. Abt's research team explored various methods for categorizing learners. The Federal reporting requirements for programs receiving funding appropriated under the Adult Education Act, as amended by the 1991 National Literacy Act, describes first-level learners as those scoring below the sixth grade level on a standardized literacy test. In the national evaluation of ABE programs conducted by Development Associates (1993), programs using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) defined beginning level as a score below the sixth grade equivalent. The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) programs generally distinguish Beginning from Intermediate ABE at the threshold value of 210 (CASAS, 1996).

For the purposes of this study, it was determined that the sixth grade equivalent would be used as a general guideline for defining first-level learners. However, it is recognized that learners scoring at a higher level on the TABE or similar test may lack proficiencies that are critical to functioning in society and thus may require services designed for first-level learners. Furthermore, while programs may attempt to place learners in classes according to their test score, the needs of learners do not always coincide with program schedules and thus classes often serve learners at a variety of proficiency levels (Reder, 1997). While it is useful to have a general guideline for selecting programs and learners that will participate in the study, the qualifications to the guideline also are being considered in conducting the study.

**Case Studies.** In order to understand the activities that ABE programs carry out to support staff and learners as well as instructional methods that have the potential of being effective with first-level learners, Abt's research team conducted site visits to eight ABE programs and one program providing comprehensive reading instruction to at-risk youth. The team selected these programs based on their data on learning gains for first-level learners and/or the presence of instructors whom had received training in a specific instructional method in either reading or mathematics and used these methods with first-level learners. Abt's team conducted a variety of data collection activities during these visits, including interviews with program administrators and staff and focus groups with learners. The team also observed classes taught by the trained instructors and reviewed program documents.

Exhibit 1 presents the characteristics of the nine case study sites. As shown in the exhibit, the programs represent the variety of service delivery systems in adult education, such as programs sponsored by community-based organizations, community colleges, and local education agencies. They also are diverse geographically in terms of their rural or urban location and the size of the cities that they serve. All of the programs serve learners in relatively small classes, and all of the ABE programs incorporate the use of tutors. A number of the programs

**Exhibit 1**  
**Characteristics of Case Study Sites**

Program		Organizational Type	Instructional Area(s) Examined		Class Size	Use of Tutors	Special Populations of Learners
			Reading	Mathematics			
Name	Location						
Adult Education Center, Inc.	Durango, Colorado	Community-based organization	Lindamood-Bell		Approximately 5-7 learners; whole group and individual instruction	Yes	Youth; Native Americans
Adult Learning Center	Brockton, Massachusetts	Local education agency	Wilson Reading System	Math	Approximately 10 learners; whole group, paired, and individual instruction	Yes	Level one primarily ESL learners
Adult Learning Project (ALP)	Anchorage, Alaska	Volunteer literacy program/ community-based organization	Slingerland Reading; Writing		Approximately 10-12 learners; whole group and paired instruction	Yes	Welfare recipients; Alaskan natives; some ESL learners
Boys Town Reading Center	Omaha, Nebraska	Private organization	Reading Components		8-10 learners; whole group, small group, paired instruction	No	At-risk youth living at a residential treatment center
Columbia Gorge Community College	The Dalles, Oregon	Community college	Teaching the Reading Process	Math as Problem Solving	Whole group; small group, individualized instruction	Yes	Learners ranging in age from 18 to mid 40's
Community Learning Center (CLC)	Cambridge, Massachusetts	City-funded project	Wilson Reading System	Math	Approximately 8 to 15; whole group, small group instruction	Yes	Slightly over half are African-American or Haitian

**Exhibit 1 (Cont.)  
Characteristics of Case Study Sites**

Program		Organizational Type	Instructional Area(s) Examined		Class Size	Use of Tutors	Special Populations of Learners
			Reading	Mathematics			
Lane Community College (LCC)	Eugene, Oregon	Community college	Teaching the Reading Process	Math as Problem Solving	Whole group, small group, individualized instruction	Yes	Youth integrated into adult classes
Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)	Somerville, Massachusetts	Local education agency	Wilson Reading System		5-8 learners; whole group, paired, and individual instruction	Yes	
Toyota Families for Learning Program	New Orleans, Louisiana	University-based family literacy project	Reading	Math	4-10 learners; whole group, small group, individualized instruction	Yes	

In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of both the operation of these programs and the instructional methods being used, Abt's staff conducted a variety of data collection activities. They conducted interviews with program administrators and staff as well as focus groups with learners. They also observed the classes taught by the trained instructors and reviewed program documents. Case studies of each of the programs are presented in Part II of this report. An analysis of the findings from the case studies is presented in Part I. This analysis highlights the aspects of program structure and operations, including instruction, which the administrators and staff in these programs believe are critical to providing quality services to learners. These aspects of program operations and instruction will be further examined in the Strategy Evaluation Phase of this study.

## **Program Management and Leadership Development**

**Management Structures.** The importance of program management has been an emerging theme in statewide program improvement initiatives in adult basic education since the early 1980s (Alamprese et al., 1987; 1993). While effective instruction is a critical element in learner success, the system that supports this instruction also plays a pivotal role. The function of program management has been viewed in a number of ways. One perspective is that the administrator is responsible for the overall operation of the program and does not play a role in instructional leadership. In this case, leadership activities may be carried out by a key staff member, such as the program coordinator, or may be absent. Another view is that the administrator may facilitate programmatic change by working with the staff. In either case, it appears that successful programs have an element of leadership that may be present in different forms (see Exhibit 2). In this study, attention will be given to the role of program management and an administrator's or coordinator's function in managing the staff and services that support student learning. The responsibilities of an administrator in an adult education program may vary substantially by the size of the program. In programs serving large numbers of learners or in programs located in complex institutions, an administrator may have responsibility for a number of services that includes basic skills education and often must report through multiple levels of administration in an institution. In smaller programs, an administrator may have responsibility for a more limited range of services and may report to a board of directors or to a senior administrator in a school district. In either case, the administrator is accountable for the fiscal and programmatic soundness of the program and has responsibility for obtaining and managing the resources that are critical in supporting a quality program. The administrators in the case study sites used a variety of strategies to support the staff and provide the needed services for learners. At Lane Community College in Eugene, for example, the administrator appointed instructional leaders to be responsible for the content of the programs and to meet with the teaching staff to discuss the methods and materials used in the variety of basic education services being delivered. This structure enabled the instructional leaders to work together in forming a cohesive instructional program, with the teaching staff to implement the program, and with the administrator to determine the types of support they needed to carry out their responsibilities.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Case Study Site Staff and Qualifications**

<b>Program</b>	<b># of Paid Professional Staff</b>	<b>Administrative Staff</b>	<b>Instructional Staff</b>	<b>Instructor Qualifications</b>
Adult Education Center, Inc.	7	One full-time director, full-time coordinator	Five part-time instructors, volunteers	All instructors have B.A. degrees, one had a teaching certificate, and one has a teaching license
Adult Learning Center	26	One full-time department head, three full-time coordinators	Two full-time lead instructors, seven part-time ESL instructors, 11 part-time ABE/GED instructors, and three para-professionals	Instructors must be certified teachers
Adult Learning Project (ALP)	6	One full-time director, full-time coordinator	One full-time instructor, three part-time instructors, volunteers	Three instructors have Masters degrees, three have B.A. degrees
Boys Town Reading Center	12	One full-time director and several administrators	Eight full-time instructors, para-professionals	Most instructors are certified high school teachers
Columbia Gorge Community College (Skill Center)	19	One full-time program director, two part-time coordinators	Sixteen part-time instructors, full-time Basic Skills/GED instructors	Thirteen hold B.A. degrees and nine hold Masters degrees
Community Learning Center (CLC)	23	One full-time program director, eight coordinators who also may serve as instructors or counselors	Three full-time instructors, 11 part-time instructors (in addition to coordinators who may also serve as instructors)	Instructors are not required to be certified; approximately half have Masters degrees
Lane Community College (LCC) (Adult Basic and Secondary Education Department)	76	One full-time departmental chair, six lead instructors	75 instructors (primarily part-time)	Staff hold instructor-level positions with B.A. degrees at LCC; some are working toward Masters degrees in adult education

**Exhibit 2 (Cont.)  
Case Study Site Staff and Qualifications**

<b>Program</b>	<b># of Paid Professional Staff</b>	<b>Administrative Staff</b>	<b>Instructional Staff</b>	<b>Instructor Qualifications</b>
Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)	55	One part-time supervisor and four administrators	Three full-time instructors (ABE, ESL, GED), approximately 40 part-time instructors	All staff hold B.A. degrees and over half have Masters degrees
Toyota Families for Learning Program	15	One part-time director and one coordinator	Three full-time adult education instructors, three full-time early childhood instructors, three classroom volunteers	Instructors are primarily former elementary school teachers

Another example of a type of structure is a development team in which instructors are provided with time to work together in creating and revising curriculum to meet the needs of learners. At the Adult Education Center in Durango, three instructors worked as a team to adapt the Lindamood-Bell methods and materials for use with first-level adult learners. This group met frequently to refine materials, tested the methods and materials in their classes, and then revised them based on their collective experiences. The instructional staff at the Adult Learning Project in Anchorage also worked together in adapting the Slingerland Approach for use with adults and in piloting classes to determine the utility of the materials. At the Adult Learning Center in Brockton, a Program Development Team comprised of lead instructors met weekly to discuss potential weaknesses in the program and develop solutions.

The convening of staff in regular meetings is another approach for fostering communication and discussion about learners and the services provided to them. A number of the programs visited had staff meetings during which the instructors had the opportunity to discuss issues concerning learner recruitment and retention as well as teaching content. While a primary objective of the meetings was to convey administrative information, they also were the occasion for substantive discussions about the program.

**Staff Development.** As indicated in Exhibit 3, all of the programs visited provided opportunities for staff to develop new skills through participation in state and local training events. Instructional staff also played a leadership role at the state level. In some instances, staff became trainers and conducted staff development activities for other instructors in the state. In another instance, an instructor became part of a state team to develop standards for mathematics instruction. The support from a program's administrator was a key factor that enabled staff to access training and assume leadership activities.

One reason the programs were selected as case study sites was that they had teachers trained in the use of a specific instructional approach. Seven of the programs met this selection criterion and the instructors from these programs attended formal training events to learn a new instructional approach, such as training in the Lindamood-Bell Learning Process, the Wilson Reading System, or the Slingerland Approach. The instructors from the community colleges in Oregon participated in state-sponsored training institutes in reading and math instructional strategies. In all instances, the instructors had to adapt and integrate what they learned in the training to meet the instructional needs of the learners. The Toyota Families for Learning Program sent the staff to training sponsored by the National Center for Family Literacy, which focused on the teaching of adult basic education in the context of family literacy.

**Exhibit 3**  
**Instructor’s Participation in Professional Development Activities**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Conferences, Task Forces, State Committees</b>	<b>Training in Instructional Methods</b>
Adult Education Center, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-sponsored conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lindamood-Bell training</li> </ul>
Adult Learning Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead math teacher participates in a statewide math task force</li> <li>• State-sponsored training on learning disabilities; professional development activities sponsored by the Brockton Public Schools or SABES, the statewide staff development provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilson Reading System training</li> <li>• Orton-Gillingham training</li> </ul>
Adult Learning Project (ALP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-sponsored annual professional development conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slingerland training</li> </ul>
Boys Town Reading Center		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys Town-sponsored training incorporating the Stages of Reading</li> </ul>
Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full-time ABE instructor has participated in staff networks including the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Network of Washington and the Northwest Regional Literacy Resource Center</li> <li>• Statewide ABE conference</li> <li>• State-sponsored training, including summer institute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Math as Problem Solving” training</li> <li>• “Teaching the Reading Process” training</li> </ul>
Community Learning Center (CLC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-sponsored conferences</li> <li>• State-sponsored training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training through the state-funded Young Adults With Learning Disabilities (YALD) Project</li> </ul>
Lane Community College (LCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-sponsored training including summer institute; workshops that are part of the state’s Professional Development series</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Math as Problem Solving” training</li> <li>• “Teaching the Reading Process” training</li> </ul>
Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State adult educator’s conference</li> <li>• Staff development activities sponsored by Adult Literacy Resource Institute and SABES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wilson Reading System training</li> </ul>
Toyota Families for Learning Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual conference sponsored by the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCFL training in family literacy</li> </ul>

The instructional staff also were encouraged to extend their skills and become part of training teams that developed and delivered training across a state. For example, the instructor at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge became the coordinator for the Young Adults with Learning Disabilities (YALD) training, and staff from Lane Community College and Columbia Gorge Community College are trainers for the reading and math modules that are part of the Northwest region training process. The instructor at the Adult Learning Center in Brockton was member of the state team that adapted the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards for use with adults. All of these opportunities help to build the leadership skills of staff and strengthen the instructional services offered to learners.

## **Instructional Strategies**

A key focus of this study is the instruction that is delivered to first-level learners. In developing a framework for examining the quality of instruction, Abt's research team has considered two aspects: the overall approach that instructors use in organizing a lesson and the content of what is being taught in a lesson. While these aspects of instruction are commonly studied in elementary and secondary education, little attention has been given to these topics in adult basic education.

**Organization of Instruction.** As a preliminary step in examining instructors' approach to instruction, Abt's research team developed a framework for documenting the stages of a lesson and the activities that take place during a lesson. The stages of a lesson were derived from the work undertaken by California's ESL Teacher Institute in the mid 1980s, and are similar to the work in elementary and secondary education. The instructional activities were identified through the observations that were conducted at the case study sites. Abt's staff observed classes conducted by 24 instructors in the nine programs that were visited. Presented in Exhibit 4 are the results from the observations of the overall instructional practices that were undertaken by the teachers. As indicated in the exhibit, the stage of a lesson that instructors most frequently omit is introducing a lesson by stating its objective or purpose. Rather, instructors often begin with background information without orienting learners to the goals of a lesson. Overall, the majority of instructors moved through the stages of a lesson as they are conceived in theory.

In terms of instructional activities, the majority of instructors used a variety of ways of promoting learning. Almost all (92 percent) instructors used multiple modes of instruction, including didactic, group response, and individual response. One instructional practice that is used to promote learner engagement is cooperative learning. As described in Vignette A, this method can be used effectively to promote teamwork and a shared sense of responsibility among learners. Most instructors (88%) also provided multiple opportunities for learners to practice what they learned. In Boys Town, for example, learners reviewed a homework assignment in which they worked with a list of vocabulary words. The instructor then read each word aloud and asked the learners to repeat them after her. She then read sentences that contained missing words or she provided definitions and asked learners to identify the appropriate words. Next, she asked learners to use the target words in sentences they read aloud. About half (58 percent) of the observed instructors also taught more than one subject simultaneously. The opportunity to do this was a function of the content being taught in a lesson.

**Exhibit 4**  
**Overall Instructional Practices Undertaken by Instructors**

Instructional Practices <sup>1</sup>	No. and % of Instructors Observed <sup>2</sup> Demonstrating Practice
	N=24
<b>I. Stage of Lesson</b>	
1. Instructor communicates purpose/objective of lesson.	13 (54%)
2. Instructor builds learners' background knowledge.	16 (67%)
3. Instructor provides new information to learners.	24 (100%)
4. Instructor checks learners' understanding before moving to next stage of lesson.	20 (83%)
5. Instructor provides opportunities for learners to practice knowledge/skills learned.	21 (88%)
6. Instructor monitors learners.	23 (96%)
7. Instructor provides feedback to learners on accuracy of their response.	18 (75%)
<b>II. Instructional Activity</b>	
1. Instructor makes learners feel they are welcome.	23 (96%)
2. Instructor attempts to involve all class members in the learning process.	19 (79%)
3. Instructor teaches more than one subject simultaneously.	14 (58%)
4. Instructor uses multiple modes of instruction.	22 (92%)
5. Instructor provides opportunities for cooperative learning.	20 (83%)
6. Instructor monitors activities of small groups (if applicable).	18 (75%)
7. Instructor uses multiple steps in teaching complex skills.	20 (83%)
8. Learners track progress they make.	17 (71%)

<sup>1</sup> Order of activities listed reflects the order in which they are undertaken.

<sup>2</sup> Instructors were observed for periods ranging from 25 to 90 minutes.

## Vignette A

### Cooperative Learning

#### Columbia Gorge Community College, The Dalles, OR

Cooperative learning is a technique used at the Columbia Gorge Community College's ABE Skills Development class to encourage peer teaching and teamwork. The session observed began as a lesson on reading maps. The instructor reviewed with the class three different ways to determine the distance between two cities on a map: the mileage chart, the mileage scale, and mile markers. Having distributed maps and rulers to all learners, the instructor quickly went over these three methods and then divided the class into two groups (each with three learners). She asked the groups to first estimate the distance between two points on the map. One group used the mileage scale while the other group used the mile markers to arrive at the answer.

Next the instructor introduced the topic of the lesson, "Planning a Vacation," and passed out a packet of materials that described the assignment. The lesson was designed as a contest -- the team of learners that meets all the criteria for the vacation plan will win a prize. The instructor then summarized on the board the two main activities the groups were to undertake: a plan for each day with a budget for all expenses and a written description and an oral presentation of the trip experience.

The groups were asked to plan the details together but each learner was expected to write an individual account of the vacation. The instructor had brought various vacation brochures and travel resources to the class and the groups were encouraged to use the materials and ask questions. The groups then discussed the possibilities and shared ideas about various vacation destinations. While one group was observed working together well to exchange information and consider their options, the other took more time to work collaboratively and make decisions. The instructor came to the aid of the latter group and asked questions to help guide their decision-making process. She also encouraged each group member to participate. "Can you help him get the group going? What are your ideas for a great vacation?" They began to discuss possibilities with the instructor and slowly became engaged as a group. She then gave them five more minutes to deliberate.

Once the destination had been chosen, the instructor asked the groups to plan *how* to get there. A table in the assignment hand-out was used to guide this planning. For each day, the groups had to write a daily log for each leg of the journey (The Dalles - Sacramento), the mileage (656 miles), and the budget (\$23.90 gas, \$60 food, and \$70 Best Western Hotel.) By the end of the session, both groups were observed to be engaged in lively discussion and debate about their trip. The groups were asked to present their progress on their plan before handing in the group work to the instructor. The class was to continue to work on this assignment for the next weeks.

For example, the class observed at Columbia Gorge Community College was team taught and the instructors integrated writing with reading and math, and taught these subjects in the context of the life task of planning a vacation.

Another strategy that is important in instruction is the provision of corrective feedback to learners so that they understand when their responses have not been accurate and why. The instructors observed used different ways of providing feedback to learners. Sometime the instructors gave the feedback themselves or solicited comments from other learners to clarify a response. Vignette B presents an illustration of the strategy used by one instructor in teaching phonics.

This framework of the stages of a lesson and instructional activities is an initial attempt to codify instructional practice. It is a useful method for understanding the activities that are carried out in a class and potentially can be utilized in staff development for new instructors in adult education. The framework will be further tested in the Strategy Evaluation Study and modified based on the pilot test.

In summary, across the eight programs, the majority of instructors (at least 70%) used multiple modes of instruction and when teaching complex material, used distinct steps. In addition, they provided opportunities for cooperative learning and for learners to practice what they learned. As learners worked, instructors monitored their progress, provided them with feedback, and had learners keep track of their own progress. Before moving on to new material, most instructors checked for learners' understanding.

**Content of Instruction.** In designing this study, the decision was made to examine three content areas in instruction for first-level learners--reading, mathematics, and writing. While the programs visited delivered instruction in all of these areas, the research team's observations focused on the reading and mathematics instruction that was delivered.

Seven of the nine programs incorporated phonics in their reading instruction. Five programs used one of the following approaches--Lindamood Bell Learning Process, Wilson Reading System, or the Slingerland Approach. The instructors had been trained in these approaches and were adapting them for use with adults in their classes. For beginning level learners, three programs held classes that used primarily phonics to develop initial reading skills. These instructors then taught the next level of reading classes blending phonics instruction with the teaching of other reading skills, such as the development of vocabulary and comprehension, usually in a context relevant to the learner.

Presented in Exhibit 5 is a summary of the reading instructional practices that were observed at the sites. This list was derived from Chall's reading components and represents an ideal list of what might be taught in a reading class. Thirteen instructors were observed teaching reading to various skill levels of learners at different points in a course. Thus, the absence of practices may indicate that the class observed had not yet addressed the skill or content listed in the exhibit.

**Exhibit 5**  
**Reading Instructional Practices Undertaken by Instructors**

Instructional Practices <sup>1</sup>	No. and % of Instructors Observed <sup>2</sup> Demonstrating Practice	
	N=13	N=7*
<b>I. Instructor builds background.</b>	8 (62%)	
<b>II. Instructor develops word recognition.</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses repetition and drill.</li> <li>2. Has learners memorize common multi-syllabic words.</li> <li>3. Has learners use words in and out of context.</li> </ol>	11 (85%) 3 (23%) 9 (69%)	
<b>III. Instructor conducts word analysis activities.</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses specific methods (e.g., Lindamood-Bell, Wilson, Slingerland).</li> <li>2. Stimulates phonemic awareness.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has learner distinguish between differences in spoken language that correspond to differences in written language.</li> <li>b. Has learner practice letter-sound correspondences and engage in oral reading to apply skills.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Teaches phonics in a variety of ways.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has learners identify initial consonant sounds.</li> <li>b. Has learners identify long and short vowel sounds.</li> <li>c. Has learners identify word families.</li> <li>d. Teaches learners that a consonant digraph is two consonants representing one sound.</li> <li>e. Teaches learners that a consonant blend represents two consonants that can both be heard.</li> <li>f. Teaches learners the “double e” generalization.</li> <li>g. Teaches learners to recognize common consonant clusters.</li> <li>h. Has learners apply the consonant-vowel-consonant generalization.</li> <li>I. Has learners apply the vowel-consonant-market generalization.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Has learners use both inductive and deductive approaches to decoding.</li> <li>5. Provides opportunities for learners to use knowledge in reading meaningful, connected text.</li> </ol>	7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 7 (100%) 6 (86%) 5 (71%) 2 (29%) 4 (57%) 6 (86%) 4 (57%)	7 (54%) 11 (85%)

**Exhibit 5 (Cont.)  
Reading Instructional Practices Undertaken by Instructors**

Instructional Practices <sup>1</sup>	No. and % of Instructors Observed <sup>2</sup> Demonstrating Practice	
	N=13	N=7*
<p><b>IV. Instructor provides opportunities for oral reading.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has learners take turns reading aloud.</li> <li>2. Has learners figure out correct words when they make mistakes.</li> <li>3. Has learners re-read phrases if they have difficulty at first.</li> <li>4. Has learners engage in “dyad” or chorus reading.</li> <li>5. Has learners read aloud for fluency.</li> <li>6. Has learners read aloud for accuracy.</li> </ol>	<p>12 (100%)+ 10 (77%) 9 (69%) 0 (0%)+ 8 (62%) 6 (46%)</p>	
<p><b>V. Instructor provides opportunities for silent reading and development of comprehension.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has learners make use of pictures, headlines, summaries that precede texts in workbooks.</li> <li>2. Has learners ask themselves post-reading questions that correspond to the categories thought to be critical for reading comprehension.</li> <li>3. Has learners retell and/or summarize previously read material.</li> <li>4. Has learners ask and answer literal and interpretive questions.</li> <li>5. Has learners ask and answer transition questions.</li> <li>6. Has learners ask and answer questions that encourage synthesis.</li> <li>7. Has learners engage in reciprocal questioning.</li> </ol>	<p>3 (23%) 6 (46%) 7 (54%) 6 (46%) 4 (31%) 5 (38%) 0 (0%)+</p>	
<p><b>VI. Instructor conducts spelling activities.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasized memorization of words through repetition.</li> <li>2. Conducts spelling tests.</li> <li>3. Includes survival and high-interest spelling words in appropriate contexts.</li> </ol>	<p>9 (69%) 10 (77%) 9 (69%)</p>	
<p><b>VII. Instructor builds vocabulary.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has learners use word lists.</li> <li>2. Has learners use words alone.</li> <li>3. Has learners use words with other activities.</li> <li>4. Has learners use words in context.</li> <li>5. Has learners process words in an active, generative way.</li> <li>6. Teaches learners to recognize differences and similarities in words.</li> </ol>	<p>10 (77%) 11 (85%) 8 (62%) 9 (69%) 8 (62%) 8 (62%)</p>	

\* Only seven instructors used a phonemic approach.

+ Not applicable to instructor engaged in tutorial.

<sup>1</sup> Order of skills listed reflects order in which they are generally taught.

<sup>2</sup> Instructors were observed for periods ranging from 25 to 90 minutes.

## Vignette B

### Corrective Feedback

#### Adult Education Center, Durango, Colorado

Instructors at the Adult Education Center in Durango, Colorado were observed providing corrective feedback that enabled learners to solve reading problems efficiently and confidently. A key element of the center's Lindamood-Bell program is the questioning techniques of the instructors or tutors used to respond to learners' questions. This method helps students learn how to self-correct their reading.

There is consistency in the instructional approach with all three instructors working with the ABE level learners (as well as the tutors) that reinforces the problem-solving and self-correcting skills of these learners. The instructors, rather than providing a simple solution to learners' questions, point out the tools (particular phonics rules and skills) that learners have acquired through the Lindamood-Bell curriculum. Reminded of these decoding or encoding skills, learners use the strategies previously taught and are able to successfully analyze words. Aided by the L-B names for the letter sounds or groups of sounds, learners have been provided a system for organizing the letters, sounds, and phonics rules they must use to master basic reading and writing skills. For example, a learner is asked to spell "humorous." When "hummerous" was given as the spelling for "humorous," this prompted the instructor to question the pronunciation of such a spelling. The group then discussed the difference in short and long vowel sounds, the phonics rules of double consonants, and the root word "humor" to arrive at the correct answer.

Phonics rules often were reviewed and reference was made to the L-B system of sound identification, such as the "crazy rs" that do not follow the usual rules. Learners were asked to explain their problem-solving skills as they presented answers to questions regardless of whether they were correct or incorrect. This questioning technique of instructors encourages the learner to understand why a certain reading strategy was chosen and to think carefully before providing a solution. As a result, learners in Durango contemplate different strategies before committing to a particular answer and articulate their own reasoning in self-correcting the errors that they make.

Seven of these instructors used one of three phonics approaches listed above. In all of these classes, the instructors were experimenting with strategies for engaging learners using these approaches, and the research team's observations indicated that the learners were active participants in the learning process and appeared to enjoy this mode of instruction. What also was clear is that the instructors are working to document their instructional methods and that these promising practices will require further experimentation and testing. This study provides the opportunity for the instructors to carry out these activities.

While some of the instructors focused on specific approaches to phonics, others incorporated elements of phonics in their reading instruction. For example, the instructors in Oregon who were trained to use an approach to reading instruction that blends phonics and whole language while incorporating different contexts in teaching reading skills. This approach enabled students to apply what they learning to issues of interest to them. The site visit to the reading classes at Boy's Town provided the research team the opportunity to examine a highly structured series of reading courses that were based on the teaching of the reading components and incorporated phonics. The instruction is interactive and moves quickly to keep the learners focused and involved. Because the learners live on site and are required to attend class, the program is successful in carrying out a coordinated, intense reading curriculum.

Although Abt's research team observed instructors teaching classes, at one site an instructor was observed conducting a tutorial using the Wilson Reading System. A description of this session is presented in Vignette C. The methods the instructor used in the tutorial are illustrative of the strategies the instructors were using with whole classes in teaching phonics.

Regardless of the specific approach used to teach reading, there were several characteristics that were shared by the majority (at least 69%) of the instructors. When teaching new words, for example, most instructors used repetition and drill. In addition to providing learners with opportunities to use the words alone, words were presented as part of meaningful, connected text. Instructors also asked learners to take turns reading aloud and they allowed learners to self-correct when they made mistakes.

In addition to using innovative approaches to reading instruction, the programs also taught mathematics in interesting ways using contexts from daily life. Presented in Exhibit 6 is a summary of the mathematics instructional practices that were used in codifying the teaching that was observed. This list was derived from the work undertaken in Massachusetts to develop standards for mathematics instruction for adults. These standards also are being used by a group of adult education mathematics instructors nationwide who are working together to promote the standards and improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics to adults. The instructors from the case study sites in Oregon and Massachusetts have been involved in this effort.

A key to learner engagement is the relevance of the material being taught. As shown in Vignette D, there are a variety of ways to make the teaching of mathematics both interesting and relevant to the lives of learners.

**Exhibit 6**  
**Mathematics Instructional Practices Undertaken by Instructors**

Instructional Practices <sup>1</sup>	No. and % of Instructors Observed <sup>2</sup> Demonstrating Practice
	N=8
<p><b>I. Math as Problem Solving</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instructor has learners apply multiple strategies for solving problems.</li> <li>2. Instructor has learners generalize problem solving strategies to real-world situations.</li> <li>3. Instructor has learners use tools such as calculators and computers.</li> <li>4. Instructor has learners determine, collect, and analyze data in new problem solving situations.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">8 (100%) 6 (75%) 7 (88%) 7 (88%)</p>
<p><b>II. Math as Communication</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instructor has learners use language as part of math to explain ideas and concepts.</li> <li>2. Instructor teaches learners to recognize the relation of mathematical language and notation to mathematical ideas.</li> <li>3. Instructor has learners discuss with others, reflect and clarify their own thinking about math outcomes.</li> <li>4. Instructor has learners define everyday, work-related math situations using concrete or graphical methods.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">6 (75%) 5 (63%) 2 (25%) 6 (75%)</p>
<p><b>III. Math Connections</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Instructor teaches learners to view math as an integrated whole that is connected to adult life skills and work-related settings.</li> <li>2. Instructor teaches learners to apply mathematical thinking and modeling to solve problems that arise in the real world.</li> <li>3. Instructor provides opportunities for learners to describe problems using a variety of representations.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">6 (75%) 6 (75%) 5 (63%)</p>

<sup>1</sup> Order of skills listed reflects order in which they are generally taught.

<sup>2</sup> Instructors were observed for periods ranging from 25 to 90 minutes.

## Vignette C

### **Wilson Reading System Tutorial SCALE, Somerville, MA**

Many of the learning disabled students who are referred to SCALE by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission are served through intensive one-on-one tutorials. A tutorial based on the Wilson approach was observed in which a dyslexic learner was being helped with his reading and vocabulary skills. At the beginning of the session, the instructor had the learner read over the list of words they had developed with words that had been difficult for him. When the learner struggled to read a word, the instructor had him tap the word out by syllable.

Next, the instructor had him write the words on the board that she explained were to get his large muscles involved. He sounded words out by syllable as he wrote them. When he spelled words incorrectly, she told him that he made a mistake and he usually figured it out for himself. Often when the learner made mistakes it was because the words were not spelled phonetically. After he finished writing all of the target words on the board, he was asked to read them aloud, exaggerating the syllables. Then the instructor read the words aloud one by one and had him erase them. Sometimes she read the definition of the words or created sentences using the words and he erased them.

Next, the learner read a passage from the Wilson materials aloud. The instructor then read it to model it for him, and she asked him to explain what was happening in the story to check for comprehension. The learner did this and then read the passage again, more smoothly this time. Next the learner was asked to read sentences that had the target words in them. First he read them silently and then aloud for fluency. When he missed a word, he was asked to spell it to help with his pronunciation.

Then another passage from Wilson reader was read aloud by the learner. Again the instructor read it aloud and asked the learner what it meant to check for comprehension. The learner read it again. The tutorial then came to a close, and the instructor used a tape recorder to record the words that caused difficulty for the learner so that he could review them for homework. He also was given an assignment involving a list of words for which he was to indicate whether syllables were open or closed and whether they contained silent es or exceptions.

The majority (at least 75%) of the mathematics instructors used a variety of real-world scenarios to demonstrate the applicability of the strategies they were teaching. Learners were also taught that there may be more than one way to arrive at a solution and they were taught that solutions may be represented in a variety of formats. At the Adult Learning Center in Brockton, for example, learners were observed making both pie charts and bar graphs to represent the same information. Across programs, learners also were provided with opportunities to use tools such as calculators and rulers and to discuss mathematical concepts with their classmates. At the Community Learning Center, for example, small groups of learners were required to discuss and negotiate a governmental budget (see Vignette D).

**Supports to Learning.** The programs visited used a variety of methods to support the learning process. One example is the use of tutors. The majority of programs either used tutors in class or had tutors available for learners to access outside of class. Illustrated in Vignette E is the strategy that the Adult Education Center in Durango has used to train tutors to work with first-level learners in the initial reading classes. During the class, the tutors work in pairs with the learners to carry out the phonics activities and then meet together in private spaces to conduct oral reading and comprehension checks. All of the programs using tutors conduct training and attempt to extend learners' instructional time through the use of tutors.

Another support to learning is the management of enrollment that is used by programs to limit the numbers of learners participating in a class. For example, SCALE in Boston limits enrollment to five learners to five in the first reading class and to eight in the next level class. As instructors have incorporated the use of phonics, they have found that part of the class may involve individualized instruction. As noted above, the use of tutors is one method of achieving this. Limiting class size also facilitates the instructional process with first-level learners.

A third aspect of promoting learning is the length of class. For example, all of the adult education programs had classes that exceeded an hour in length (Durango, Columbia Gorge, and SCALE had three-hour classes). This has been a viable option for programs serving welfare clients who were mandated to participate in adult education. However, with the changes in the welfare laws this schedule may be more difficult to implement. All instructors agreed that intensity of instruction is important and that further study is needed to determine the length of time that it is reasonable to expect a learner to remain engaged in a formal instructional setting.

## **Learner Assessment**

A variety of assessment instruments are used by the programs visited, as is shown in Exhibit 7. Each of the three phonics programs examined has a placement instrument that is designed to identify the skills that learners must have in using the approach. These instruments, however, are designed only for diagnosis and not to measure progress. The Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR) also is a placement instrument developed by Chall that is used by programs in Massachusetts.

**Exhibit 7**  
**Standardized Tests Used for Diagnosis and Assessment**

Assessment Instrument	Constructs Measured by Instrument	Programs Using Instrument	Use of Instrument by Programs	
			Diagnosis	Pre-Post Assessment
Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE)	Vocabulary, reading, spelling, language (grammar), number operations, problem solving	Community Learning Center	Community Learning Center	
Basic Adult Skills Inventory System (BASIS)	Ability to use basic reading skills in everyday life	Columbia Gorge Community College; Lane Community College	Columbia Gorge Community College; Lane Community College	
Botel Reading Inventory	Decoding, spelling, word recognition, word meaning	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	
Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)	Ability to use basic reading skills in everyday life	Columbia Gorge Community College; Lane Community College		Columbia Gorge Community College; Lane Community College
Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR)	Word recognition, word analysis, oral reading, silent reading comprehension, spelling, and word meaning skills	Adult Learning Center; Community Learning Center; Boys Town	Adult Learning Center; Community Learning Center; Boys Town	Adult Learning Center; Community Learning Center
Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests	Vocabulary, comprehension	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences		Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (post only)
Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT)	Ability to gain meaning from print, use function, grammar, an graphic/phonemic cues	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Adult Education Center, Inc.
Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization (LAC)	Auditory perception, conceptualization of speech sounds	Adult Education Center, Inc.; Adult Learning Project	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Adult Education Center, Inc.
Nelson-Denny Reading Test	Vocabulary, comprehension, reading rate	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	
Nelson Reading Skills Tests	Word meaning, reading comprehension, sound-symbol correspondence, root words, syllabication	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences; Adult Learning Project	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	Adult Learning Project

**Exhibit 7 (Cont.)  
Standardized Tests Used for Diagnosis and Assessment**

Assessment Instrument	Constructs Measured by Instrument	Programs Using Instrument	Use of Instrument by Programs	
			Diagnosis	Pre-Post Assessment
Rosner Test of Auditory Assessment Skills (TAAS)	Auditory analysis	Community Learning Center	Community Learning Center	
Slingerland Screening Test	Visual memory, visual discrimination, visual-kinesthetic memory, auditory kinesthetic memory, auditory analysis, auditory discrimination, orientation in time and space, written expression	Adult Learning Project	Adult Learning Project	
Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT)	Word recognition	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences	
Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)	Vocabulary, reading comprehension, language mechanics, language expression, spelling, mathematical calculation, mathematical concepts and calculation	Adult Education Center, Inc.; Community Learning Center; Toyota Families for Learning	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Community Learning Center (post only); Toyota Families for Learning
Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Locator	Vocabulary, reading comprehension, language mechanics, language expression, spelling, mathematical calculation, mathematical concepts and calculation	Toyota Families for Learning Program	Toyota Families for Learning	
Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)	Word recognition, word analysis, spelling, arithmetic	Adult Education Center, Inc.; Community Learning Center	Adult Education Center, Inc.; Community Learning Center	Adult Education Center, Inc.; Community Learning Center
Woodcock-Johnson Word Attack (W-J)	Word attack skills	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Adult Education Center, Inc.	Adult Education Center, Inc.

## Vignette D

### Life Skills Math

#### Community Learning Center, Cambridge, MA

A math class observed at the Community Learning Center provides a good example of how an instructor incorporates life skills into a math lesson. To begin the class, the instructor wrote the word “percent” on the board and initiated an introductory discussion about the word. “What is the symbol for percent? And where else do you see percents?” The learners responded with examples of shopping discounts (20% off) and sales taxes (5% in addition). The instructor then wrote the word “budget” on the board and asked learners for a definition. “Do you all make budgets?” The lesson topic was thus introduced as “Percents and Budgets.”

A brainstorm exercise followed and the instructor asked, “What goes into your household budget?” Learners offered six items: rent, insurance, utilities, food, clothes, and health insurance. The class was asked to first make their own budget with these items and then to develop a budget for a government. Each learner was instructed how to make a pie chart and how to illustrate the budget items and respective portions. “If I spent half of my budget on rent, how would I show this?” The class discussed the relative size of different items in their budgets before proceeding to mark the pie charts. The learners were asked to add up the total percentage to see what, if any, amount of the budget remained.

Once their own budget was complete, the class began to develop a budget for a government. First, the learners listed various items on which governments spend money: cleaning the environment, military services, housing, education, foreign aid, welfare, Medicaid/social security, national debt, and public safety. Then the instructor gave a set of plastic cups and a bag of one hundred pennies to two different groups of learners. The cups were labeled with each of the spending categories previously discussed. The learners then were instructed to allocate all of the pennies into the labeled cups and to develop a pie chart that presented the corresponding total government budget. Learners engaged in these discussions and completed activities with interest throughout the lesson. This lesson incorporated many different themes, such as calculation of percents, household budgeting, presentation of information in chart form, and government or civic education.

## Vignette E

### Use of Tutors

#### Adult Education Center, Durango, Colorado

At the Adult Education Center in Durango, Colorado, tutors attend two sessions a year of the Colorado Literacy Action Certified Training program. All tutors receive at least 12 hours of orientation and training when they become part of the Adult Education Center. At the end of this training, the tutors receive a certificate of completion. Throughout the year, the center sponsors tutor recognition events and awards.

To prepare tutors for working with first-level learners, they sit in class with the learners to learn the Lindamood-Bell curriculum through observation and participation. This allows them full mastery of the program that is used to instruct learners. Tutors then are able to follow the same strategies and use the same language that the instructors introduce in the classes. A consistent and regular message from both instructor and tutor works well to reinforce the instruction.

Tutors only begin working with individual learners when they are able to do so, usually after about six hours of observation and guided practice. Tutors do not work with only one learner, but rather are rotated to all learners so that tutors and learners alike may adapt to all possible pairings for support and guidance.

The staff from the majority of programs indicated that multiple types of information are needed to understand learners' skills and that the use of one instrument does not provide an adequate analysis. This is particularly true for the use of general literacy assessments, such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The staff at the Adult Learning Center in Durango, for example, found that the scores on the TABE often did not provide an accurate picture of learners' skills and that the use of additional instruments measuring specific reading skills was needed. The interest among staff in the programs visited in using a variety of reading assessments to both diagnose learners' skills and measure progress is encouraging and has potential for providing important information about learners and the use of instruments. The challenge will be to develop an array of instruments that provide good information and that are efficient to use. One aspect of this that requires further study is the sequence and pacing of test administration. The staff involved in assessment at the sites indicated that it is often helpful to administer the assessments in stages, particularly for first-level learners, to make them feel comfortable and to develop a comprehensive picture of their skills.

An important part of the assessment process is the provision of feedback to learners. In some programs, the assessment results were given to learners to guide their learning and to assist them in tracking their own progress. Instructors varied in their approaches to this process. Some synthesized the information for the learners while others reviewed the actual test results. The instructors who did provide feedback thought that this was a critical process for setting expectations and engaging learners in self monitoring. At the Community Learning Center, instructors hold individual conferences at the end of each semester in which learners are asked to assess their own progress. The instructor then indicates how he or she believes the learner performed and discusses the learner's future goals.

While formal assessment instruments are used in monitoring learner progress, a number of the instructors also maintain learner information in folders. Samples of learners' work are kept in the folders as well as instructors' notes about learner progress. Both the instructors and tutors in Durango wrote daily notes about each learner and these were reviewed by the instructor to determine whether a change might be needed in the tutoring of the learner. Overall, instructors thought that this type of documentation was essential for monitoring the progress of first-level learners in addition to formal assessments.

## **Adapting to Change**

A characteristic that all programs exhibited is the capacity to adapt to change. Change comes in various forms to adult education programs. New learners, funding requirements, and data reporting mandates are examples of the types of changes that a program must accommodate. The ongoing process of recruiting and retaining learners also is a challenge for all programs, particularly those serving native born, first-level learners. The lesson learned from these case studies is that the administrators and instructional staff must work together to anticipate problems, identify solutions, and implement the solutions while maintaining a cohesive program. Because serving first-level learners requires particular attention to the intensity and types of instruction offered, it appears that adaptation to change is a particularly critical element in delivering these services. The programs examined in this study are illustrative examples not only of promising instruction and supports to learning, but also of the process skills needed in program management.