

ESPERANZA CENTER

CATHOLIC CHARITIES IN ACTION

Guide on How-to- Teach Non / Low- Literate ESL Students

Prepared by
UMBC Students

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

- 1) Non/Low-literate vs. literate Student**
- 2) Talking to the student about literacy**
- 3) Why Should students become literate?**
- 4) Keys to Teaching Reading**
- 5) Keys to Teaching Writing**
- 6) 1 Hour Lesson Plan for Reading**
- 7) 1 Hour Lesson Plan for Writing**

1) NON/LOW-LITERATE VS. LITERATE STUDENT

Non-Literate Student:

- Has little or no formal education
- Cannot read or write in their native language
- Does not understand the relationship between the letters in the Roman alphabet and the sounds they make

Low/Semi-Literate Student:

- Has little to some formal education, but perhaps did not finish school due to work, family, or political reasons
- Can read and write in their native language, but have significant difficulty doing so
- Understands the relationship between most of the letters in the Roman alphabet and the sounds they make

Literate Student:

- Likely has a significant amount of formal education
- Can read and write with ease in their native language
- Understands the relationship between all of the letters in the Roman alphabet and the sounds they make

<http://robinsadultesl.com/pdf/Bryant.pdf>

<http://www.coabe.org/html/pdf/PreLit%20Curriculum%20Guide%20%28Revised%20%20Spring%202009%29%20for%20COABE%20website.pdf>

2) TALKING TO THE STUDENT ABOUT LITERACY

To identify whether the student is non-literate:

- 1) Ask the student whether they can take notes in their native language
- 2) Ask the student to read and explain the notes they wrote down in their native language
- 3) Ask the student to read a sentence orally in their native language

After you have identified difficulty with reading or writing in their native language:

- 1) Ask the student whether they would like to focus or work on reading and writing
- 2) If the student says yes, proceed with the lesson plans contained in this packet (the majority of students will agree to work on literacy)
- 3) Assuming you speak the student's native language and they want to learn to read and write, be sure to highlight differences between the letters and sounds in their native language and in English

If the student does not want to learn to read and write:

- 1) If the student says no initially, proceed to discuss the list of reasons contained under "Why Should the Student Become Literate"
- 2) After explaining the reasons for literacy, if the student still says no, proceed to teach them orally.

3) WHY SHOULD STUDENTS BECOME LITERATE?

Advantages of Literacy:

- Able to better understand English grammar
- Able to better understand English pronunciation
- Able to read sources (books, newspapers, letters, emails)
- Able to write documents (personal letters, job applications, emails)
- Research suggests that literate people live healthier because they can read medical instructions, nutritional information, and guides about health (<http://www.read.org.za/?id=161>)
- Able to read recipes and cook new meals
- Access to a wider range of jobs (secretary, manager,
- Research suggests that parents who can read and write improve their children's education, as literacy enables parents to be more involved in their child's education and assist their child with schoolwork
- Can read transportation information (road signs, bus schedules, metro schedules, taxi prices)

4) KEYS TO TEACHING READING

Reading:

- Explain: Reading is a long, but possible process that requires outside practice
- Remember: Do not assume the student has a previous understanding of letters or phonemes or words, ask the student about their understanding
- Order of Topics:
 - 1) Alphabet/Sounds (Write and say “A” “a” “Apple” “ah-apple”)
 - 2) Phonemes (Write and say “ba-” “b” “a” “b-a” “ba-” “be-”...)
 - 3) Their name (Write and say “Carlos” “Ca-” “ar-” “lo-” “suh-”)
 - 4) Words (Write and say “cat” “c-” “a-” “t-” “c-a-t” “cat”)
 - 5) Sentences (“The cat eats food.” “The-cat-eats-food.”)
 - 6) Explain reading symbols (, . :)
 - 7) Pausing at a comma and period
 - 8) Reading for understanding (Break up articles into chunks)
 - 9) Parts of a paragraph (topic sentence, quotes, body, conclusion sentence)

<http://www.teachreading.info/teach-reading-to-adults/>

5) KEYS TO TEACHING WRITING

Writing:

- Explain: Learning to write is a long, but achievable process that requires outside practice.
- Remember: All of the writing conventions (writing in a straight line, letter formation, capital letters at the beginning of a sentence, periods) need to be taught. Don't aim for perfection in the students' writing.
- Order of Topics:
 - 1) Holding the pencil, writing left to right
 - 2) Uppercase and lowercase letters (Write and have them copy each part of each letter) (There are letter guides on how to make each stroke in each letter in many of the books)
 - 3) Numbers (Make each part of the number in the correct order)
 - 4) Writing conventions (periods, uppercase to start sentence)
 - 5) Words (explain spacing)
 - 6) Sentences (explain that sentences are complete thoughts and explain what a run-on sentence is)
 - 7) Spelling (Practice saying a word and having the student dictate how to spell that, explain the "th-" sound, "ph" sound and other sounds particular to English and their native language)

[http://www.coabe.org/html/pdf/PreLit%20Curriculum%20Guide%20%28Revised%20%20Spring%202009%29%20for%20COABE%](http://www.coabe.org/html/pdf/PreLit%20Curriculum%20Guide%20%28Revised%20%20Spring%202009%29%20for%20COABE%20)

6) 1 HOUR LESSON PLAN FOR READING

Reading

1) Introduction: (5 minutes)

- Introduce the theme of reading and the importance of learning to read in English (as described earlier in the packet)

2) Reading Skills Identification: (15 minutes)

- Select one of the local Latino newspapers that are in the entry way of the Esperanza Center and have the student read it aloud in Spanish or select a text in the student's native language
- Select one of the "Easy to Read" newspapers in English and have the student read it aloud
- Discuss the difficulties that the student has with reading

3) Alphabet/Phonemes (20 minutes)

- Beginner: Using a whiteboard or alphabet flashcards, review the pronunciation of each letter, using it in a word, have the student repeat it
- Intermediate: Introduce the different vowel sounds that each vowel makes, using each in a word
- Advanced: Introduce unique English phonemes (Examples: "ch" as in "chalk," "th" as in "this," "qu" as in "quilt,")

4) Incorporating the Sounds into Reading (20 Minutes)

- Beginner: Select an Oxford Picture Dictionary and have the student pronounce each letter separately of vocabulary to understand the breakdown of reading each letter up to reading words
- Intermediate/Advanced: Select a new text from any of the reading books and have the student read the passage. Review difficult sounds, words, and errors by breaking down the words into phonemes.

7) 1 HOUR LESSON PLAN FOR WRITING

Writing

1) Introduction: (5 minutes)

- Introduce the theme of writing and the importance of learning to write in English (as described earlier in the packet)

2) Writing Skills Identification: (15 minutes)

- Have the student write a sentence and their name in their native language (Observe how much difficult the student has with this)
- Ask the student to copy down a sentence from a text in English, then ask the student to write a new sentence
- Discuss the difficulties that the student has with writing

3) Alphabet/Words/Writing Mechanics (20 minutes)

- Beginner: Use an alphabet writing guide available in many different books on how to make each stroke of each letter to have the student practice each letter, be sure to demonstrate each part of the letter
- Intermediate: Have the student write vocabulary words as you say them , work on spelling patterns (spelling units are available in some books)
- Advanced: Discuss formal vs. informal writing mechanics, discuss the parts of a paragraph (introduction, body information, conclusion), use written passages to demonstrate the structure

4) Incorporating Skills into Writing (20 Minutes)

- Beginner: Have the student write each letter of various vocabulary words in the Oxford Picture Dictionary, discuss errors with the student
- Intermediate/Advanced: Select a book on writing and have the student read a passage and then write the answers to discussion questions in full sentences, discuss errors with the student