

Self-Study Guide for Evidence-Based Practices in Adult Literacy Education

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Self-Study Guide for Evidence-Based Practices in Adult Literacy Education

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The purpose of this self-study guide is to help adult literacy education providers collect, organize, and analyze evidence that they can use to improve program performance. It was designed to help educators consider which types of evidence to collect and which components of adult education instruction may be important for evaluating implementation. Sources of evidence for this review include records and data such as lesson plans, rosters, and student results confirming that processes are in place to monitor teacher and student success. The components important to evaluation of implementation were determined based on a thorough review of the literature on adult education. The guide was developed in partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast's Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance. It was pilot tested with Florida adult literacy educators through the support of the Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy programs in adult basic education, with limited resources, aim to address the needs of a large population in the United States. Although the relationship between adult literacy and well-being has been documented (DeWalt, Berkman, Sheridan, Lohr, & Pignone, 2004; Nutbeam 2008), educators are often unsure how to implement literacy programs (Miller, Esposito, & McCardle, 2011). The purpose of this guide is to help adult literacy education providers collect, organize, and analyze evidence they can use to improve program performance.

This self-study guide was developed in partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast's Florida Career Readiness Research Alliance. Feedback from alliance members and program administrators in their districts helped shape the guide. The guide was pilot tested with Florida adult literacy educators through the support of the Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators.

The guide was developed to benefit states, districts, colleges, and programs implementing adult literacy education. It was designed to help educators consider which types of evidence to collect and which components of adult education instruction may be important for evaluating implementation. Sources of evidence for this review include records and data such as lesson plans, rosters, and student results confirming that processes are in place to monitor teacher and student success. The components important to evaluation of implementation were determined based on a thorough review of the literature on adult education; they are outlined below.

Purpose and use of the self-study guide

The purpose of the Self-study Guide for Evidence-Based Practices in Adult Literacy Education is to help states, districts, colleges, institutions, schools, and programs:

- *Collect information for developing an implementation plan for adult literacy education.* A list of possible sources of evidence to consider on the status of current program implementation is provided for each component area. Sources of evidence may then be identified and discussed as the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide is completed (see below).
- *Prioritize needs for improvement while developing the implementation plan for adult literacy education.* Individual and group ratings allow colleagues to discuss and prioritize components for improvement.
- *Collect data on program and student performance in different areas of implementation*—referred to as progress-monitoring information—for continuous program improvement.
- *Evaluate the implementation of adult literacy education* through discussion with stakeholders and the development of an action plan.

The guide aims to promote reflection on current strengths and challenges in planning or implementation, initiate conversations among staff, and identify areas for improvement. Teachers and others who deliver adult literacy education, along with advisors and program-based administrators, should participate in the self-study process.

Adult literacy educators who pilot tested this guide determined that the beginning or end of the school year was the best time to conduct a self-study. This allows educators to reflect on implementation in the previous year and plan for the next year.

The self-study process takes approximately three to five hours. Time estimates are provided in the steps outlined in box 1. It is helpful to elicit input from participating teachers and others who deliver adult literacy education, in addition to advisors and program-based administrators.

The self-study process works best when led by a dedicated facilitator. The facilitator should be a careful listener and able to lead and structure discussions around collected evidence and decisionmaking processes. The facilitator should be knowledgeable in instructional policies, procedures, and implementation of adult literacy education practices and research. The facilitator should review the guide before the process begins, which should take approximately two hours.

Components of the guide

This guide has five components:

- Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide.
- Possible Sources of Evidence for Consideration.
- Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.
- Planning Next Steps Form.
- Action Plan Template.

Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide

The Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide includes guiding questions to support planning and implementation of adult literacy education programs. The guiding questions are included to stimulate the thinking of team members on practices that may be considered for each area. It will be most helpful for facilitators to select team members who are knowledgeable about these practices in schools and districts so that team members will have information on how these practices are implemented locally.

The Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide's six areas were identified by the REL Southeast after a review of the research and practice literature (see appendix A). That review suggested that the following areas could be important for educators to consider when planning and implementing adult literacy education programs:

- Development and use of student data profiles.
- Instructional methods and materials.
- Instructional time.
- Teacher preparation and training.
- Communication.
- Instructional environment and processes.

Box 1 lists the steps for completing the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide.

Possible Sources of Evidence for Consideration

Before convening a meeting of the self-study team, the facilitator should consider sources of evidence and create a one-page list of the types of evidence. The Possible Sources of Evidence for Consideration section of the guide may be helpful for this purpose. The list of the types of evidence collected by the facilitator will be used with the discussion that occurs during the group rating process (described in Step 5 in box 1).

Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form

After all self-study team members have completed the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide, the facilitator should guide the team through a group rating process. The team should use the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form to reach agreement on the current status of implementation of the adult literacy education program and to plan the next steps. The most important part of this process is the discussion that goes into group rating. Box 1 lists the steps for completing the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.

Box 1. Steps to complete the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide, Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form, and Planning Next Steps Form

1. **Recruit 5–7 members for the self-study team, and convene a meeting to complete the self-study process.** Select a dedicated and knowledgeable facilitator. Then recruit teachers, others who deliver adult literacy education, volunteers, staff members, facilitators, and relevant program-based administrators (program managers, site managers, department chairs, coordinators, curriculum specialists, and advisors) knowledgeable in adult literacy education policies and implementation to complete the team.
 2. **Present an overview of the self-study process to the team, including a review of data and possible sources of evidence identified by the facilitator.** [Activity length: 30 minutes]
 3. **Ask each team member to review the content of the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide for each area to be rated (for example, Development and use of student data profiles, Instructional methods and materials, and Instructional time) and the Support for Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide areas (appendix A).** [Activity length: 20 minutes]
 4. **Answer team members’ questions about the review.** [Activity length: 20 minutes]
 5. **Have each team member complete a numerical rating for each area in the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide.** Ratings (1–4) should be based on team members’ existing knowledge and discussion of evidence sources identified by the facilitator. Each team member should rate each area independently to provide individual feedback. Team members may abstain from rating areas that they do not feel competent to rate. [Activity length: 60 minutes]
 6. **Rate as a group to reach majority agreement.** There are several steps to group rating [Activity length: 90 minutes]:
 - *Rate.* Ask each team member to provide the numerical rating selected for each of the six areas.
 - *Discuss the rationale for high frequency numbers.* Ask someone who selected a high frequency number to talk about what motivated that rating.
 - *Discuss the rationale for lower frequency numbers.* Ask other members to talk about what motivated their ratings.
 - *Rate.* Ask each member to provide a second numerical rating. Members may change their initial ratings based on the discussion.
 - *Record ratings.* If there is majority agreement (determined by majority vote), record the high frequency number on the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form. If agreement is not reached (there is no high frequency number), continue discussing and rating until majority agreement is reached.Repeat this process for each area until majority agreement is reached for each area.
 7. **Discuss and record initial team thoughts on priorities, next steps, and activities on the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form.** [Activity length: 20 minutes]
 8. **Complete the Planning Next Steps Form.** The facilitator leads a discussion with the team about the priorities for action and then about development of a detailed implementation plan for next steps and activities that are most urgent and actionable. Finally, the facilitator leads a discussion to identify potential challenges to the plan and uses that information to complete the Action Plan Template. [Activity length: 60 minutes]
-

Planning Next Steps Form and Action Plan Template

The Planning Next Steps Form is used to prioritize the elements in the six areas based on the evidence shared during majority agreement discussions and on each area's importance to the success of the adult literacy education program. The self-study team should review the group rating scores together. After this review, the team should highlight areas revealing a need for development or improvement and identify two or three top priorities from the six areas for action planning. The team should then record the priority areas and complete a detailed plan for next steps and activities, noting any potential challenges. Once this step is complete, the facilitator should use the information to complete the Action Plan Template.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

SCORING GUIDE

Area 1: Development and use of student data profiles

“Assessing a student’s reading ability is important in programs where reading instruction is individualized or where growth in reading is monitored” (p. 35). “An important finding in the Adult Education research suggests that assessing several components of reading in order to generate profiles of students’ reading ability gives teachers much more instructionally relevant information than any test of a single component can” (p. 35).

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

Part 1.1 A data collection process, beginning at student intake, is in place to collect and share data on student assessment and planning for proper program and instructional placement

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- Does the program’s master schedule indicate who will deliver adult literacy education, during what times, in what location, for which students, and in what size group?
- Are there clear eligibility requirements for determining who will receive adult literacy education?
- Does the school determine what level of support eligible students will receive through instruction?
- Does the program use teacher recommendations, previous academic experience, writing samples, interviews, or existing assessment data to assess students’ adult literacy education needs and place students in the correct level of instruction as soon as possible after a student enters the program?
- Are students asked if they have been previously diagnosed with a disability?
- Are students asked if they have had previous formal schooling in the United States or elsewhere?
- Are students’ goals for the program, postsecondary training, and career identified to assist with placement?
- Does someone ensure that all students’ literacy needs have been identified so students are placed appropriately and so that teachers are aware of those needs?
- Is there a more efficient way to identify students’ literacy needs?

___ Does someone interpret the results of the academic assessments and translate the findings into instruction?

___ Is there a process for developing a clear postsecondary or career articulation plan for students in the program aligned to student literacy proficiency and goals?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Part 1.2 Teachers/programs are able to track student progress through the use of valid and reliable assessments

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

___ Do plans used to track student progress ensure consistency in data collection, aggregation, analysis, and review?

___ Are assessments administered to monitor academic progress?

___ Are data analyzed for instructional use and to assign students to sections or small groups according to instructional need?

___ Does the program have a thorough process to identify and select valid and reliable standardized literacy assessments?

___ Does the program ensure that multiple assessments are not redundant?

___ Does evidence show that the assessments can predict literacy success in postsecondary education and the workplace?

___ Does the program align progress monitoring assessments, student goals, teacher curriculum frameworks, required standards, and outcome measures?

___ Does the program offer regular and frequent (such as biweekly) meetings on student progress?

___ Can students track their own progress to see their performance growth?

___ Does each student's schedule consider progress steps and program completion requirements and focus on assessments targeted to student needs?

- ___ Does the program train teachers on administering assessments, making instructional and grouping decisions, reviewing student progress, and determining changes in placement?
- ___ Do teachers and students use data to set goals, adjust instructional practices, and guide the selection of curriculum materials to enhance student-centered learning, strengthen student motivation, and increase student engagement?
- ___ Does the program address student retention?
- ___ Does the program provide for student accommodations for assessments, if needed?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Area 2: Instructional methods and materials

“Federal and state policy makers should move quickly to build on and expand the existing infrastructure of adult literacy education to support the use of instructional approaches, curricula, materials, tools, and assessments of learners consistent with (a) research on reading, writing, learning, language, and adult development; (b) research on the effectiveness of instructional approaches; and (c) knowledge of sound assessment practices” (p. 252).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences.

Part 2.1 A plan is in place to use criteria for selecting interventions and curricula that have been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Does the program have criteria for evaluating and selecting interventions and curricular materials for use in classes (for example, a rubric or checklist)?
- ___ Are all components of selected interventions or curricula available in their entirety to ensure that each intervention or curriculum is delivered as intended (with fidelity)?
- ___ Are all students able to engage in personalized learning (to work and practice independently at their own level) and to ensure that the materials align closely with student needs?
- ___ Is there a clear process for selecting and implementing differentiated interventions for students struggling with early literacy development/foundational reading skills?
- ___ Does the program provide access to instruction for students with disabilities?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program’s implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Part 2.2 A plan is in place that reflects instructional practices shown through empirical evidence to increase student achievement

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Are there procedures and policies for using selected materials?
- ___ Have individuals who will be delivering instruction received professional development to support effective use of selected reading interventions and curricula?
- ___ Does someone facilitate the development of instructional (lesson) plans?
- ___ Are lesson plans informed by student assessment data and aligned to individual student needs and skills?
- ___ Are classroom observation data used to ensure that teachers are implementing best practices during instruction?
- ___ Do classroom observations reveal that students are engaged in learning, and is instruction relevant and rigorous?
- ___ Do observations help verify the fidelity of implementation and support for effective instructional practices (for example, observations of adherence to intervention components delivered with quality, teacher-created portfolios that include artifacts of instruction)?
- ___ Does the program incorporate student writing into the curriculum?
- ___ Does the program integrate literacy instruction across subject matter areas?
- ___ Does the program differentiate instruction according to student needs in each subject area?
- ___ Does the program use a Response to Intervention process to ensure that students with disabilities, and other students in need of more intensive instruction, receive the level of support needed for success?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Area 3: Instructional time

“One primary reason for limited progress may be that adults lack sufficient amounts of instruction and practice for improving skills” (p. 77). “Reasons reported for dropping out of adult education include... the pace of instruction (either too fast or too slow) ... and inconvenient class location or schedule” (p. 77).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences.

Part 3.1 The school has established a schedule that will provide the appropriate frequency, consistency, and duration of instruction to meet adult learners’ needs

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Does the program schedule provide adequate time (enough days per week and minutes per day) for instruction?
- ___ Does the schedule devote enough time for students with disabilities and others with significant literacy deficits to provide the intensity of instruction needed to enable academic growth?
- ___ Do diagnostic assessment data indicate that instructional time is adequate to meet student needs?
- ___ Does the program offer literacy courses in a range of time slots that are convenient for adult learners?
- ___ Is there a process to learn about schedules that are most convenient for adult learners?
- ___ Does the program consistently implement the instructional schedule as designed?
- ___ Do learning management systems allow students time for additional practice?
- ___ Has the program considered competency-based education, personalized learning, or blended and online approaches to provide as many opportunities for students as possible?
- ___ Has the program considered whether to co-enroll adult learners into both literacy courses and career readiness, postsecondary, or industry certification courses?
- ___ Are there guidelines or policies for class sizes?
- ___ Has the program identified subject matter experts who can provide guidance on pacing and instructional time?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program’s implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Area 4: Teacher preparation and training

Researchers note the importance of ensuring that adult literacy teachers are well trained and prepared for instruction and that they are offered ongoing professional development and coaching. Examples of evidence-based recommendations for teacher preparation include hiring experienced, full-time teachers (p. 110) and providing teachers with classroom aides (p. 97).

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

Part 4.1 A plan is in place to identify, hire, and retain faculty able to teach academic literacy skills effectively to adult learners

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Does the program effectively recruit new teachers and advertise teaching positions?
- ___ Does the program appropriately vet teacher candidates for hiring (including their instructional background and expertise)?
- ___ Are there criteria to ensure that newly hired teachers can effectively instruct adult learners in academic literacy skills?
- ___ Is the program taking steps to retain high-quality faculty?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Part 4.2 A plan is in place to provide professional development and ongoing support for teachers providing adult literacy education

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Do teachers receive orientation and initial training?
- ___ Are follow-up and other professional development opportunities offered?
- ___ Does someone ensure that teachers receive ongoing training?
- ___ Does the program offer ongoing professional development that relates to the instructional materials used in the classroom?
- ___ Are professional development offerings tied to program goals and outcomes, evidence-based practices, standards, and curriculum needs?
- ___ Does the program schedule professional development offerings to meet teachers' varying availability (nights, weekends)?
- ___ Are there incentives for teachers to participate in professional development?
- ___ Do staff receive training on how to address the needs of students beyond instruction, such as transportation, homelessness, and health issues?
- ___ Do staff know whom to contact for social services or other wraparound services that adult learners and their families might need?
- ___ Has the program planned or implemented professional learning communities for collaborative professional development among staff?
- ___ Does the program identify and select mentor teachers to support new teachers or teachers needing support—through observations, coaching, co-teaching, or something else?
- ___ Does the program have a timeline that teachers and administrators have agreed on for teachers' implementation of instructional practices modeled during professional development?
- ___ Does the school use rubrics or checklists to conduct ongoing observations of the fidelity of teachers' instruction?
- ___ Do classroom observations inform administrators about the kinds of support and feedback teachers may need?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Area 5: Communication

Researchers note the importance of communication and community building in ensuring that students receive assistance in transitioning to postsecondary training and careers. “Adult learners can face individual, institutional, and policy-related barriers to successful transitioning to postsecondary education. State directors of adult learner programs have discussed providing additional support services as a way to address these barriers” (p. 8).

Hector-Mason, A., Narlock, J., Muhsani, H., & Bhatt, M. P. (2017). *State strategies to facilitate adult learners' transitions to postsecondary opportunities* (REL 2017–223). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.

Part 5.1 A plan is in place for communication and collaboration that will ensure successful startup and ongoing implementation of instructional programs

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Is someone responsible for organizing and coordinating administrators, program coordinators, counselors, and teachers for the startup of adult literacy education programs?
- ___ Is someone responsible for identifying school personnel and community volunteers, if used, who will provide instruction and support?
- ___ Is someone responsible for identifying training opportunities for individuals interested in providing instruction?
- ___ Is someone responsible for creating instructional schedules and intake procedures, ensuring timely assessment of students to determine eligibility for adult literacy education, and identifying students for instructional placement?
- ___ Has the program reached out to educators who have served previous cohorts of students to determine which prior practices were viewed as being successful?
- ___ Is someone responsible for marketing and publicizing the program to ensure that the community understands the mission statement and services offered?
- ___ Is someone responsible for confirming that the program connects with other agencies and service providers to ensure that wraparound services are available for students who may need them?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Part 5.2 A plan is in place that enables teachers, administrators, counselors, and others involved in delivering adult literacy education to collaborate regularly on students' growth and program success and improvement

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- Do all teachers understand the instructional goals and progress for each student and discuss student progress with appropriate team members?
- Does the program deliver successful outcomes for students as determined by reviews of standardized literacy outcome measures?
- Do all teachers know how to track and share data on student progress during conferences in a way that students and other team members clearly understand?
- Are teachers using information gained during instruction to inform students and the adult education program team about progress?
- Do teachers collect student work and other informal data during instruction to share at team meetings and student progress conferences?
- Is information from program coordinators and counselors shared and used by teachers?
- Does someone facilitate collaborative discussions among teachers, program coordinators, and counselors about students' instructional needs?
- Do students and family members receive resources to support and build students' academic skills at home?
- Does someone ensure that students make a positive connection with program members and other students in the first three weeks of instruction to foster a sense of community and boost retention?
- Does someone contact students who consistently miss class?
- Does someone ensure that students have access to job fairs and postsecondary training opportunities?
- Are former students invited back to share their success stories and challenges to assist adult educators with program improvement?
- Is a suggestion box available for students and staff to encourage the sharing of ideas to improve the program?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Area 6: Instructional environment and processes

Researchers note the importance of making the instructional environment conducive to learning for adult education students and of having processes in place to support student engagement and productivity. Examples of evidence-based recommendations for instructional environment include learner-centered classes (p. 100), community building (p. 125), and differentiated teaching environments (p. 125).

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

Part 6.1 A plan is in place to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Does the program have criteria for creating an instructional environment that provides healthy and safe conditions that are conducive to learning and that minimize distractions (attractive design, print rich, appropriate physical space and furniture, good lighting)?
- ___ Is the entrance to the instructional setting inviting?
- ___ Is there a plan to regularly monitor the instructional environment to ensure that it remains a healthy and safe learning space throughout the school year?
- ___ Is space consistently available to provide instruction?
- ___ Are instructional materials and supplies readily available?
- ___ Does the program have clear policies and procedures for customer service and intake?
- ___ Do staff follow established policies and procedures for customer service and intake?
- ___ Do administrators create and share assessment schedules?
- ___ Do staff follow established assessment schedules?
- ___ Does the program differentiate policies and processes for adult basic education, GED, and English learner instruction?
- ___ Do faculty and staff create a positive and appealing instructional environment that encourages adult learners to remain in the program and meet their goals?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

Part 6.2 The learning environment is adaptive to the social, emotional, and cultural needs of adult learners

Guiding questions

To help you determine a numerical rating for this area, consider each question and then answer Yes (Y), No (N), or Developing (D).

- ___ Have faculty and staff received training in the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students, and are they aware of what services and supports are available for students?

- ___ Are procedures in place for faculty and staff to identify and report concerns about social, emotional, and cultural needs among students so that the needs can be addressed quickly?

- ___ Do administrators consider students' social, emotional, and cultural needs to help students have a successful adult literacy education experience?

Write the rating number below that best describes your program's implementation progress overall.

My rating before group discussion: _____

My rating after group discussion: _____

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR CONSIDERATION

This list of possible sources of evidence for each Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide area provides facilitators and self-study team members with information to review when thinking about and discussing current implementation of practices in adult literacy education. After the team has reviewed this list, the facilitator should create a list of relevant types of evidence for the group discussion. Team members will review the evidence that they have collected and compare it to the guiding questions listed for each part of the Scoring Guide as they complete the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form (see next section).

Area 1: Development and use of student data profiles

Part 1.1 A data collection process, beginning at student intake, is in place to collect and share data on student assessment and planning for proper program and instructional placement

Possible sources of evidence

- Student program progression plan. Program progression plans are typically developed by local adult literacy education programs and align with state policies and recommendations to identify criteria (such as course mastery, attendance, and assessment scores) that students must meet to advance to the next stage or level or to exit the program.
- Program improvement plan with consideration for student outcomes.
- Documentation of assessments and other criteria used to identify students' literacy skills, including assessments such as GED, Test for Adult Basic Education, and Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System; attendance; enrollment; prior academic experience; learning assessments; writing samples; student interviews; and student program goals.
- Documentation of student grades in academic courses and prior assessment scores.
- Program schedule for administering assessments to monitor academic progress.
- Program evaluation/performance reporting and monitoring requirements.

Part 1.2 Teachers/programs are able to track student progress through the use of valid and reliable assessments

Possible sources of evidence

- Student program progression plan.
- Program improvement plan.
- Instructional implementation timeline or program master schedule.
- Instructional course schedule for adult literacy education teachers.
- Student placement policy for adult literacy education and evidence that this policy is being followed.
- Information provided to students on their progress and mastery of stated goals.
- Documentation of criteria used to select assessments.
- Documentation of assessments used to identify students' literacy needs.
- Documentation of timeline for regular (biweekly) student progress updates.

Area 2: Instructional methods and materials

Part 2.1 A plan is in place to use criteria for selecting interventions and curricula that have been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement

Possible sources of evidence

- Review of current instructional materials for alignment with program standards and student needs.
- Review of criteria for selecting evidence-based literacy interventions and curricula.
- Log or record of literacy interventions and curricula currently available at the school.

Part 2.2 A plan is in place that reflects instructional practices shown through empirical evidence to increase student achievement

Possible sources of evidence

- Professional development plans for teachers, including instructional materials, an instructional schedule that maximizes instruction time, and instructional practices shown through empirical evidence to increase student achievement.
- Instructional plans (lesson plans) for each course, including lesson plan templates.
- Notes from interviews with administrators and teachers who implement courses.
- Documentation of program and materials use.
- Observations of course sessions documenting use of selected materials and aligned instructional practices.
- Professional development attendance records and evaluations.
- Progress monitoring tools and data.
- Class syllabuses and timelines.

Area 3: Instructional time

Part 3.1 The school has established a schedule that will provide the appropriate frequency, consistency, and duration of instruction to meet adult learners' needs

Possible sources of evidence

- Student progression plan.
- Program and departmental master schedules (including literacy course schedules).
- Interviews with students, community members, teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff to determine best schedules.
- Review of learning-management system data.
- Review of attendance data.

Area 4: Teacher preparation and training

Part 4.1 A plan is in place to identify, hire, and retain faculty able to teach academic literacy skills effectively to adult learners

Possible sources of evidence

- Schedules for school faculty and staff.
- Advertisements and marketing efforts for hiring teachers.
- Documentation of hiring, onboarding, and scheduling work hours of teachers.

- Lists of job descriptions, resumes, and interview rubrics for vetting teacher candidates.
- Records reflecting length of employment and full-time or part-time status of faculty and staff.

Part 4.2 A plan is in place to provide professional development and ongoing support for teachers providing adult literacy education

Possible sources of evidence

- Professional development schedule and training agenda.
- Professional development training materials.
- Plan for course observation.
- Fidelity checklist/rubric for implementation of professional development related to adult literacy education.
- Interviews with school faculty and staff responsible for organizing implementation of the program.
- Evidence of a faculty and staff orientation program.
- Evidence of a mentoring program for new faculty and for other teachers needing support.

Area 5: Communication

Part 5.1 A plan is in place for communication and collaboration that will ensure successful startup and ongoing implementation of instructional programs

Possible sources of evidence

- Documentation of faculty and staff roles and responsibilities.
- Marketing and public relations plans and minutes from student recruitment meetings.
- Interviews with administrators and leaders.
- Notes from planning meetings on adult literacy education.
- Memos from administration or leaders to the community.
- Documentation of communication with students and families.
- Results of student entrance interviews.
- Verification of student contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses.
- Minutes from advisory board meetings.
- Review of student retention data and census data.
- Schedule of school-sponsored community events.
- Contact information for wraparound service providers.

Part 5.2 A plan is in place that enables teachers, administrators, counselors, and others involved in delivering adult literacy education to collaborate regularly on learners' growth and program success and improvement

Possible sources of evidence

- Interviews with adult literacy educators.
- Schedule of collaborative meetings between adult educator teams.
- Schedule of conferences with students.
- Organizational charts.
- Policy notices and reminders.
- Communication protocols with clear lines of communication.
- Memos to the community from administrators or other education leaders.

Area 6: Instructional environment and processes

Part 6.1 A plan is in place to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning

Possible sources of evidence

- Documentation of program criteria for instructional environments.
- Documentation of a custodial/maintenance plan for instructional environments.
- Procedures for faculty and staff to report concerns about the instructional environment and for timely response to these concerns.
- Documentation of available instructional spaces to provide consistent instruction (inside and outside the classroom).
- Documentation of instructional materials (complete curricula) and supplies (manipulatives, pencils, paper, technology, erasers, pencil sharpeners) available and easily accessible for instructional use.
- Interviews with students and staff to confirm that the student experience is smooth and that students receive high-quality customer service.
- Documentation of processes for intake, assessment, and student orientation.

Part 6.2 The learning environment is adaptive to the social, emotional, and cultural needs of adult learners

Possible sources of evidence

- Documentation of training for faculty and staff on adult learners' potential social, emotional, and cultural needs and on relevant services and supports for learners.
- Procedures for faculty and staff to identify and report concerns about adult learners' social, emotional, or cultural needs and for timely response to these concerns.
- Interviews or questionnaires with learners and staff to confirm that the student experience is smooth and that social, emotional, and cultural needs are considered.

IMPLEMENTATION MAJORITY AGREEMENT RATING FORM

Rating key:

1 = Not currently feasible

2 = Feasible, but not implemented

3 = In process of implementing

4 = Fully implemented

State: _____

District/College/Institution: _____

Program: _____

The facilitator will complete this form by recording the results of group ratings and discussions from initial self-study results (see Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide), thoughts on priorities, and brainstorming ideas for next steps/activities for each area rated 2 or 3 (areas where development is most needed).

Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide area	Group rating (circle number)	Priorities	Ideas for next steps/activities
Area 1. Development and use of student data profiles	Part 1.1: 1 2 3 4		
	Part 1.2: 1 2 3 4		
Area 2. Instructional methods and materials	Part 2.1: 1 2 3 4		
	Part 2.2: 1 2 3 4		
Area 3. Instructional time	Part 3.1: 1 2 3 4		
Area 4. Teacher preparation and training	Part 4.1: 1 2 3 4		
	Part 4.2: 1 2 3 4		
Area 5. Communication	Part 5.1: 1 2 3 4		
	Part 5.2: 1 2 3 4		
Area 6. Instructional environment and processes	Part 6.1: 1 2 3 4		
	Part 6.2: 1 2 3 4		

PLANNING NEXT STEPS FORM

After completing the Implementation Majority Agreement Rating Form, the facilitator will begin completing this Planning Next Steps Form by leading a discussion on the priorities for action. Following that, the facilitator will lead a discussion on developing a detailed implementation plan for next steps and activities that are the most urgent and actionable. Finally, the facilitator will lead a discussion to identify potential challenges to the plan and resources available to help overcome those challenges.

List the top three priority areas to improve implementation of evidence-based practices in adult literacy education.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Priority Area 1

What are the next steps and activities to address the listed priorities for this priority area? Consider timelines and the person or people responsible for determining the strategies or providing the resources.

What are the general challenges the team anticipates?

Outline a plan to address the challenges and tentatively identify the people responsible for each step of the plan to address this priority area.

Who will be responsible for monitoring progress as the plan is implemented?

What will be the timeline for implementation?

What budget and resources are needed to support successful implementation of the plan?

Priority Area 2

What are the next steps and activities to address the listed priorities for this priority area? Consider timelines and the person or people responsible for determining the strategies or providing the resources.

What are the general challenges the team anticipates?

Outline a plan to address the challenges and tentatively identify the people responsible for each step of the plan to address this priority area.

Who will be responsible for monitoring progress as the plan is implemented?

What will be the timeline for implementation?

What budget and resources are needed to support successful implementation of the plan?

Priority Area 3

What are the next steps and activities to address the listed priorities for this priority area? Consider timelines and the person or people responsible for determining the strategies or providing the resources.

What are the general challenges the team anticipates?

Outline a plan to address the challenges and tentatively identify the people responsible for each step of the plan to address this priority area.

Who will be responsible for monitoring progress as the plan is implemented?

What will be the timeline for implementation?

What budget and resources are needed to support successful implementation of the plan?

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Purpose: To create an Action Plan for an institution’s implementation of evidence-based practices in adult literacy education.

Directions: Using this form as a template, develop an Action Plan identifying the action items your institution must accomplish to ensure that the priorities outlined in the Planning Next Steps Form are thoroughly addressed.

Action steps What will you do?	Responsibilities Who will do it?	Timeline By when? (day/month/year)	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources available • Resources needed (financial, human, other) • Administrative support needed 	Potential barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What individuals or entities might resist? • How do we address this resistance? 	Communications plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is involved? • What methods? • How often? 	Evaluation method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you determine that you have reached your goal? • What are your measures? 	Budget
Step 1:							
Step 2:							
Step 3:							
Step 4:							
Step 5:							

APPENDIX A. SUPPORT FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION SCORING GUIDE AREAS

This appendix describes key references that provide additional support for each of the Planning and Implementation Scoring Guide areas.

Area 1: Development and use of student data profiles

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521229>.

The authors note the importance of using assessments to determine each student’s reading ability, particularly to target instruction to meet individual student needs and monitoring progress. “Assessing a student’s reading ability is important in programs where reading instruction is individualized or where growth in reading is monitored” (p. 35).

The authors also note the importance of using several data points to create student reading data profiles and develop specific instruction aligned with student reading goals. Student reading data profiles include results from all previous literacy assessments, enrollment information, and progress monitoring results. “An important finding in the Adult Education research suggests that assessing several components of reading in order to generate profiles of students’ reading ability gives teachers much more instructionally relevant information than any test of a single component can” (p. 35).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536344>.

The authors note that it is important to have assessments that are aligned with common goals for learning and that provide information that is instructionally helpful for guiding student placement and understanding student progress and program outcomes. “Good systems of assessment to improve student learning consist of (a) diagnostic assessment to inform instructors about skills the learner possesses and needs to develop; (b) formative assessment of skills being developed that need further improvement as instruction progresses; and (c) accountability assessment to inform administrators, policy makers, funders, and the public of how well the program and systems that serve adult literacy learners are working. The assessments need to be aligned with common goals for learning. Assessments of literacy need to be suitable for adults, assess all the important dimensions of reading, writing, and language, and assess a range of print and digital functional literacy skills that society demands and values” (p. 4). In addition, the authors note the importance of identifying specific student needs. “It is vital to use reliable methods to diagnose learning and reading disabilities and to adjust instruction accordingly” (p. 78).

The authors note the need for a systematic approach to using assessments in adult literacy education, with consideration for training and support. “A sound approach to assessment to support and monitor learning at the individual, program, and systems levels is systematic, with linkages among the various purposes of assessment and extensive professional training and supports needed to implement the assessments reliably” (p. 81).

The authors note important considerations when selecting assessments in adult education settings. “For adult learners, some assessment instruments are calibrated to important everyday literacy demands, and the scales from such instruments may be a far better indicator of adult literacy progress than grade equivalents” (p. 88).

The authors note the need for adult learners to self-assess and monitor their own progress toward their goals. “Learners reported several factors they perceived to help their progress: peer support, trusting the teacher, and explicit feedback, especially validation of their efforts and progress. Such findings indicate a need to develop various methods of assessment so that learners can continually assess themselves and each other to monitor progress toward learning goals” (p. 91).

Area 2: Instructional methods and materials

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521229>.

The authors note the importance of selecting evidence-based instructional materials, implementing materials as designed, and employing evidence-based instructional delivery models for adult learners. Examples of evidence-based instructional methods and materials include multimedia technology (p. 24), direct instruction in comprehension strategies (p. 104), and use of workplace-oriented materials (p. 101).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536344>.

The authors’ note: “Federal and state policy makers should move quickly to build on and expand the existing infrastructure of adult literacy education to support the use of instructional approaches, curricula, materials, tools, and assessments of learners consistent with (a) research on reading, writing, learning, language, and adult development; (b) research on the effectiveness of instructional approaches; and (c) knowledge of sound assessment practices” (p. 252).

On research on instructional materials, the authors note: “Much of the available research on adult literacy describes the use of authentic texts gathered from actual contexts in which adults used these materials (e.g., a workplace, a restaurant) or ways of reading fiction and nonfiction and descriptions of how to match a learner with text and ‘debugging’ it to bring it into the ‘learners’ instructional zone’” (p. 94).

The authors note that instructional methods should be adapted to student populations and needs. “Systematic implementation and evaluation of various approaches is required to identify the mix of strategies that will engage learners of different backgrounds for the large amounts of time required for instruction and practice to be effective. The interventions should be developed with consideration of the factors that are likely to cause attrition and lack of perseverance. Programs can then select strategies that are most appropriate with an understanding of the specific situations of their students” (p. 253).

Area 3: Instructional time

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521229>.

The authors note the importance of ensuring that schedules—course duration, length, and accessibility—meet the needs of adult education students. Examples of evidence-based recommendations for instructional time include focusing on intensity and duration (p. 102) and spending 70 percent or more of classroom time on literacy practice (p. 103). A stronger finding on intensity and duration is that “reading comprehension achievement may increase as a learner stays longer in a literacy program, although progress may be extremely variable over time” (p. 26). A weaker finding is that “spending a significant portion of classroom time practicing reading and writing,

including the occasional but direct or deliberate discussion of reading strategies, may increase learners' meta-comprehension abilities" (p. 26).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536344>.

The amount of instructional time provided has been found to make a difference in adult education student reading outcomes. "On average, learners participated in adult education programs for less than 100 hours over the course of a program year, according to the Adult Education Program Survey. Only about one-third of adults made reading gains equivalent to a grade level during the program year. These findings are consistent with the levels of participation and progress reported in the few published studies of interventions designed to develop the literacy of adults with low-to-intermediate skills and other information gathered from individual researchers and practitioners working in the field. Reading is a complex skill, and research on the development of complex skills and expertise suggests that about 3,000 hours are required for mastery; 100 hours represent 3 percent of that amount, and so it is likely to be insufficient for learning for many adults, even if the goal is not expert mastery. Thus, one primary reason for limited progress may be that adults lack sufficient amounts of instruction and practice for improving skills" (p. 77).

Scheduling and pacing of instructional time are found to be important for addressing concerns with student drop-outs. "Reasons reported for dropping out of adult education include family problems, the pace of instruction (either too fast or too slow), health issues, dislike of classwork, and inconvenient class location or schedule" (p. 77).

Area 4: Teacher preparation and training

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521229>.

The authors note the importance of ensuring that adult literacy teachers are well trained and prepared for instruction and that they are offered ongoing professional development and coaching. Examples of evidence-based recommendations for teacher preparation include hiring experienced, full-time teachers (p. 110) and providing teachers with classroom aides (p. 97).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536344>.

The authors note that adult literacy educators "are not consistently funded to participate in in-service professional development, have access mostly to short-term training and conferences, and are hindered by systemic constraints from participating in professional development" (p. 79).

Smith, C., & Gillespie, M. (2007). Research on professional development and teacher change: Implications for adult basic education. *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*, 7(7), 205–244.

The authors note that studies on professional development with adult basic education teachers found positive correlations, particularly when the professional development is of longer duration. "Professional development is more effective in changing teachers' practice (at least as self-reported) when it is of longer duration.... Longer term professional development permits more time for teachers to learn about their own practice, especially if it

includes follow-up” (p. 216). The authors note that a study of change among adult basic education teachers “found a direct and positive correlation between the number of hours teachers participated in professional development activity and the amount and type of change related to the topic of the professional development they demonstrated in the following year” (p. 216). In addition, the authors note the importance of connecting teachers’ learning with their work context, including knowledge application activities in professional development offerings, collaborating with teachers at the same location, and focusing on increasing subject-matter knowledge.

Area 5: Communication

Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., & Grunow, A. (2011). Getting ideas into action: Building networked improvement communities in education. In Hallinan, M. T. (Ed.), *Frontiers in Sociology of Education* (pp. 127–162). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer. Retrieved March 2, 2020, from https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/bryk-gomez_building-nics-education.pdf.

The authors note the importance of preparing communications and data collection processes that are sensitive to the immediate needs of students as they begin instruction in a new setting. “While summative lagging indicators are important, improvement research also needs data about specific program processes and student experiences as these occur in real time. This evidence is key for informing more micro-level activities linked to longer-term student success. For example, extant research suggests that the nature of students’ initial engagement with their community college during the first two or three weeks of enrollment is critical. Data about students’ academic behaviors and experiences during these critical weeks are key to understanding whether a pathway design is reducing early disengagement. Such data also may be used formatively to improve quick outreach efforts to students before they actually disengage” (p. 24).

Hector-Mason, A., Narlock, J., Muhsani, H., & Bhatt, M. P. (2017). *State strategies to facilitate adult learners’ transitions to postsecondary opportunities* (REL 2017–223). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED571873>.

The authors note the importance of communication and community building in ensuring that students receive assistance transitioning to postsecondary training and careers. “Adult learners can face individual, institutional, and policy-related barriers to successful transitioning to postsecondary education. State directors of adult learner programs have discussed providing additional support services as a way to address these barriers. Respondents in Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota discussed using such community-building approaches. However, only one state, Indiana, reported providing transportation assistance for adult learners who may have trouble attending college and career transition programs” (p. 8).

Area 6: Instructional environment and processes

Kruidenier, J. R., MacArthur, C. A., & Wrigley, H. S. (2010). *Adult education literacy instruction: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521229>.

The authors note the importance of ensuring that the instructional environment is conducive to learning for adult education students and that processes are in place to support student engagement and productivity. Examples of evidence-based recommendations for instructional environment include learner-centered classes (p. 100), community building (p. 125), and differentiated teaching environments (p. 125).

Lesgold, A. M., & Welch-Ross, M. (2012). *Improving adult literacy: Options for practice and research*. Washington, DC: Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536344>.

The authors note the need for assessing learners and the instructional environment. “A valid, coherent, and comprehensive system of assessment should be developed for diagnosis, planning instruction, and accountability. The system should comprehensively assess knowledge, skills, and valued psychological and functional outcomes. It should be aligned to produce different but linked forms of measurement for assessing learning at the learner, classroom, and program levels. The system should generate information that is appropriate and useful for the particular purposes and audiences: learners, instructors, program administrators, or policy makers in local, state, and federal governments. Effective assessment tools would address all of the components of literacy and map onto the primary valued learning outcomes for adult remedial and basic education” (p. 258).

The authors note specific features of learning environments that may be most beneficial for adult learners. “A number of studies suggest that programs that create supportive learning environments that take into account adults’ prior life experiences and offer opportunities for self-directed learning seem to set the stage for successful learning experiences” (p. 400). “In adult learning settings, successful programs are ones in which students are supported individually, are given enough time to work on computers (including for personal purposes), and allow collaboration between students and between teachers and students” (p. 400).

The authors also found that certain types of learning environments may have inherent challenges. “However, learning environments that include top down administration, particularly involving staff members who believe that technology is neutral and who are not adequately trained, can lead to resistance, dropping out, or other problems with participant attitudes toward learning. Furthermore, the presence of technologies alone in these programs cannot overcome the social and cultural inequities that affect adults’ beliefs and attitudes toward lifelong learning and technology, which can also affect teachers’ integration of them into adult basic education. After years of absence from formal learning situations or having negative earlier schooling experiences, adult students can be intimidated by overly structured, test-centered programs. Many times these programs, full of young people, presume basic computer literacy or English proficiency, and they do not take into account how adults who have not been involved with ICT (information and communication technologies) use can be intimidated and anxious about adopting these new roles in unfamiliar educational settings” (p. 400).

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