



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF READING

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) focuses on the important role that strong basic skills play in adults' ability to attain a secondary school diploma, transition to postsecondary education and training, and secure employment. To this end, the law specifies that “the essential components of reading instruction” be incorporated into instruction; see the statutory definition in the text box below.

What are the essential components of reading?¹

- **Alphabetics** (which includes phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding) is the process readers use to identify words. Readers must rely on alphabetic knowledge and decoding skills to read unfamiliar words.
- **Fluency** is the ability to read with efficiency and ease (speed and accuracy). Without fluency, readers attend more to decoding than to understanding the meaning of what they are reading. When word and sentence reading are automatic and fluent, readers can concentrate more fully on understanding and connecting sentences and paragraphs, which enables them to create meaning from the text.
- **Vocabulary** is the body of words whose meanings a person knows and understands. Vocabulary knowledge—specifically, the depth, breadth, and flexibility of a person's knowledge about words—is a primary predictor of reading success.
- **Reading comprehension** is the process and product of understanding text, and requires a high level of metacognitive engagement with text.

Essential Components of Reading Instruction

The term “essential components of reading instruction” means explicit and systematic instruction in—

- (A) phonemic awareness;
- (B) phonics;
- (C) vocabulary development;
- (D) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and
- (E) reading comprehension strategies.

Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 203(8).

It is important to understand that none of the essential components of reading alone is sufficient. The learner must also be assessed and provided with appropriate instruction based on the results of their individual diagnostic and formative assessment. Reading components are the foundation of the ultimate goal of helping students learn from challenging, complex texts in postsecondary education and training and for lifelong learning.

State leadership. WIOA contains four required activities for states. One requirement is “the establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under Section 231 (b), **including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction** as such

¹ Explanations drawn from National Research Council. (2012). Improving Adult Literacy: Developing reading and writing. A.M. Lesgold and M. Welch-Ross, Eds. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Available at http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13468&page=3

components relate to adults...and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.”²

What states must consider in funding local adult education programs. WIOA lists thirteen considerations states must use when selecting providers including four that deal specifically with how such providers serve the instructional needs of individuals with low literacy. Eligible providers should demonstrate:

- the degree to which they are “responsive to ...serving individuals in the community...who have low levels of literacy skills;”
- “past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals...especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy;”
- “whether the eligible provider’s program...uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction;” and,
- “whether the eligible provider’s activities...are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate...”³

National leadership. An allowable activity within the national leadership fund pertains to the improvement of reading instruction. The Department of Education may conduct activities that include “developing, improving, and identifying the most successful methods and techniques for addressing the education needs of adults, including instructional practices using the **essential components of reading instruction** based on the work of the [*Eunice Kennedy Shriver*] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development”⁴ [emphasis added].

Reading Resources. OCTAE supports states in meeting these new WIOA requirements through the following resources:

- The [Strengthening States’ Capacity to Scale Evidence-based Reading Instruction](#) (STAR) technical assistance project provides **professional development** in partnership with states.
- **Professional development** in [teaching adults to read](#) including self-access online courses, study circles, and in-person trainings is available through the LINCS Regional Professional Development Centers and Learning Portal.
- **Teaching materials, research, and discussion** on the essential components are available through the LINCS
- [Resource Collection](#) and online [Community](#).

Additional Resources:

WIOA Resources are posted at:
www.ed.gov/AEFLA

For questions, please email:
AskAEFLA@ed.gov

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² Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 223(a)(1)(B).

³ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 231(e).

⁴ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 242(c)(2)(A).