



Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study

Teachers' and Administrators' Guide

Charles A. MacArthur,
University of Delaware

Judith A. Alamprese,
Abt Associates Inc.

Deborah Knight,
Atlanta Speech School

2010
The National Institute for Literacy
Washington, DC

The Teachers' and Administrators' Guide, Lesson Plans, and Learner Activity Book that comprise the Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study were prepared for dissemination under National Institute for Literacy Contract No. ED-NIL-09-C-0058 with the University of Delaware. The development and evaluation of this course of study was supported by a grant to the University of Delaware and Abt Associates Inc. jointly funded by the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (5R01HD43798), the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) of the U.S. Department of Education.

The reading course of study materials were written by Charles A. MacArthur, University of Delaware; Judith A. Alamprese, Abt Associates Inc.; and Deborah Knight, Atlanta Speech School. Lynn Reddy served as the contracting officer's representative. Patricia Bennett served as the Program Officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute for Literacy. No official endorsement by the National Institute for Literacy of any product, commodity, or enterprise in this publication is intended or should be inferred.

The National Institute for Literacy, a Federal government agency, is a catalyst for advancing a comprehensive literacy agenda. The Institute bridges policy, research and practice to prompt action and deepen public understanding of literacy as a national asset.

Daniel Miller, Acting Director

Lynn Reddy, Deputy Director

August 2010

The citation for this document should be: MacArthur, C.A., Alamprese, J.A., & Knight, D. (2010), *Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study, Teachers' and Administrators' Guide*. Washington, DC: The National Institute for Literacy.

This document may be downloaded at <http://lincs.ed.gov>.

Acknowledgments

Many individuals contributed to the development and evaluation of this course of study. We would like to thank our project officers, Peggy McCardle and Brett Miller from NICHD; Ricardo Hernandez from OVAE; and Sandra Baxter, Lynn Reddy and Patricia Bennett from NIFL for their support throughout the project. They were active participants in coordinating our efforts with our group of research projects. The funding from NIFL to disseminate the results of our work is much appreciated.

We would also like to thank the many project staff who made the project possible through their hard work and dedication: Abt Associates Inc.—Cristofer Price and Amanda Parsad for the statistical analyses, Fumiyo Tao for site recruitment, management and data collection, Kathie Mackin and Nancy Brigham for data collection, Daphne Garcia and Meredith Beck for data coding and processing, and University of Delaware research assistants Allison Golinkoff, Leah Lembo, Katya Midgett, Zoi Philippakos, and Ximena Uribe.

Finally, we would like to thank the many adult education instructors and learners who contributed their time and knowledge in providing feedback on the *Making Sense* instruction. This feedback was essential to the improvement and success of the course of study. There are too many to name, but we deeply appreciate their contributions, without which this work would not have been possible.

Authors

Charles A. MacArthur is a professor in the School of Education at the University of Delaware. His major research interests include adult literacy, writing development and instruction for struggling writers, and strategy instruction. He served as principal investigator on the project that developed and evaluated the *Making Sense* course of study.

Judith A. Alamprese is a principal associate at Abt Associates Inc. Her research and evaluation interests include adult reading instruction, adult education program quality, interagency coordination, adult basic education and career pathways, and state systemic change. She served as director of

the experimental study in which the *Making Sense* course of study was evaluated.

Deborah Knight is co-director of the Rollins Center for Language & Learning at the Atlanta Speech School, where she leads a team of coaches who provide comprehensive professional development in literacy for schools. She was an investigator on the project that developed the *Making Sense* course of study.

Preface

Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study is an evidence-based course of study designed to teach adult learners to decode and spell words more accurately and fluently. It is designed to be used as one component of a comprehensive adult reading course. The target population for the course is adult basic education (ABE) learners at the low-intermediate level (fourth to seventh grade equivalence level). It contains 30 scripted lesson plans. The course of study begins with a review of basic alphabetic decoding skills and then teaches the most common and useful patterns of English words, and their applications in decoding, spelling, and fluent reading. The course was evaluated in an experimental study.

Materials for the course of study include three documents including a set of charts:

- Teachers' and Administrators' Guide (this document)
- Lesson Plans
- Learner Activity Book

This Teachers' and Administrators' Guide is designed to assist ABE instructors in using the *Making Sense* course of study, and provides information for ABE administrators to use in supporting instruction with *Making Sense*. The Lesson Plans document includes the 30 scripted lessons with related charts and overhead transparencies. The Learner Activity Book is designed for use by individual learners in conjunction with the lessons; each learner should have a copy. It is important to have all materials to use the course effectively. All materials are designed to be downloaded from the Internet, printed and copied for use.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.	i
Authors.	i
Preface	i
Introduction	1
Core Ideas and Features of the Course of Study.	1
Summary of Research and Development	3
Information for ABE Program Administrators on Program Supports for Implementing <i>Making Sense</i>	4
Foundational Knowledge Needed by Instructors	6
Overview of Scope and Sequence of the Course of Study	7
Lesson Format and Instructional Activities	8
Guidelines for Teaching <i>Making Sense</i>	10
Integrating <i>Making Sense</i> With a Comprehensive Reading Course: Suggestions and Guidelines	12
Some Recommendations for Assessment	14
Special Considerations for Non-native English Speakers	15
Scope and Sequence of <i>Making Sense</i>	16
Some Resources and References.	17
Some Assessment References	18
Other References	18

Introduction

Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study Teachers' and Administrators' Guide provides information for adult basic education (ABE) instructors in teaching the *Making Sense* course. *Making Sense* is an evidence-based course of study designed to teach adult learners to decode and spell words more accurately and fluently. As the title indicates, it focuses on decoding and spelling and includes instruction on developing fluent word recognition. However, it is not a comprehensive reading program. It is designed to be combined and integrated with instruction on vocabulary and comprehension.

The course of study is designed to be used with ABE learners at the low-intermediate level (approximately fourth to seventh grade reading comprehension level) who have basic sight word knowledge, the ability to make sense of relatively simple texts, and knowledge of the alphabet and letter sounds. It is not assumed that learners must have decoding or word-attack skills, as many adults at this level have minimal skill at figuring out unfamiliar words. The course of study begins with a review of basic alphabetic decoding skills and then continues with the most common and useful spelling patterns of English. Decoding skills are applied to multisyllabic words from the beginning of the course of study.

Making Sense consists of 30 lessons that provide direct instruction in spelling patterns and their applications in decoding and fluent reading. The course of study was designed to be efficient and sensitive to the skills and motivations of adult learners. The goal of efficiency was important because learners' attendance in adult education is generally limited in duration. While some learners might need intensive training, many others might benefit from a more efficient approach. Thus, the course of study was designed with a limited number of lessons that move at a relatively rapid pace. The lessons are scripted to support teacher instruction.

The Teachers' and Administrators' Guide presents information about the core concepts, design, research base, and implementation of the *Making Sense* course of study. It contains guidance for ABE instructors about the knowledge

that is needed to teach *Making Sense*, the structure and content of the lessons in the course, and the integration of *Making Sense* within a comprehensive adult reading course. Also discussed in the guide are ABE program policies and activities that can support a successful implementation of the *Making Sense* course, and the role of learner assessment in effective instruction. While *Making Sense* was developed for use in ABE reading classes, the population of adults who participate in ABE reading include both native and non-native English speakers. A section of this guide discusses considerations in using the course with non-native speakers.

Core Ideas and Features of the Course of Study

Understanding English Orthography (Why Words Are Spelled the Way They Are)

In some alphabetic languages, like Finnish or Italian or Spanish, words are pretty much spelled the way they sound. Each letter has an associated phoneme, or speech sound. But in English, spelling and pronunciation are influenced not only by letter-sounds but also by patterns of letters (e.g., the “e” in “cane” is silent but changes the sound of the “a”). Spelling and pronunciation also are influenced by morphemes, or meaning units. For example, English uses the single morpheme “ed” to mean past tense, even though the pronunciation changes depending on the phonemes in the base word (e.g., jumped, yelled, rented). As a further example, to understand the orthographic and phonemic differences between “hoping” and “hopping,” one must understand the underlying morphemes. Development of decoding and spelling skills generally follows a sequence. Beginning readers first learn the alphabetic principle and letter-sound relationships that enable them to read and spell highly regular words. Later, they learn about more complex orthographic patterns, especially for vowels. Still later, they learn how morphemes influence spelling, particularly in multisyllabic words. The *Making Sense* course follows this general sequence. The theoretical foundation of the course is Richard Venezky's (1970; 1999) seminal work on the principles that underlie English orthography.

In the project's design studies in which we pilot tested the course's concepts, we learned that adults were interested in understanding how English spelling and pronunciation work and that such metalinguistic information seemed to help them remember and apply what they learned. Thus, the course of study includes explicit information about phonology, orthography and morphology. The first lesson describes the course as the study of how the English language works and introduces the concepts of phonemes and syllables with a few exercises. Linguistic terms such as phoneme, suffix, and prefix are used freely, and notes on the English language are interspersed throughout the lessons. We think that these notes raise learners' motivation and help distinguish the *Making Sense* reading instruction from what some learners recall from primary school reading classes. This metalinguistic principle influenced the name of the course; we want learners to *make sense of decoding and spelling*.

Decoding Multisyllabic Words

One feature of the course of study that is specifically relevant to adult learners is that all patterns taught in the course, from the very simplest, are applied to multisyllabic words as soon as they are taught. The use of multisyllabic words makes the course appealing to adults and provides a way to teach decoding of simple syllables. Many of the learners in the project's design studies could read single-syllable words as sight words and, thus, did not have to apply the intended decoding skills. We could have used pseudowords for practice, which forces the use of decoding skills. However, we found that adults were resistant to, or perhaps confused by, pseudowords, or "nonsense words," as we called them. But when those same pseudowords were presented as syllables in another word, learners accepted them as a useful step in decoding multisyllabic words. In selecting words for the course, we drew primarily from the most common 20,000 words in English and included some proper nouns and slang. While we thought that the words would be potentially useful in class discussions, the course does not focus on vocabulary instruction.

Strategy for Decoding Multisyllabic Words

Another important feature of the course of study is a comprehensive cognitive strategy for decoding multisyllabic words. A large body of research demonstrates the effectiveness of teaching strategies for reading, writing, and other academic tasks. Strategies help learners to develop independence in applying knowledge to meaningful tasks. In *Making Sense*, the strategy is intended to support learners in using their new decoding knowledge while reading and writing. The strategy is modeled and practiced in the context of reading brief passages. The course emphasizes the importance of flexibility in applying the strategy; learners are encouraged to try alternate pronunciations to find one that fits the context. No course can teach all the patterns used in skilled reading. A flexible, strategic approach to decoding can assist learners in attending to word structure so that they can extend their knowledge through reading. It is important for teachers to encourage learners to use strategies whenever they read.

Integration of Spelling and Decoding

Spelling and decoding require much the same knowledge about words, and spelling is part of decoding instruction in many instructional approaches—from invented spelling in whole language approaches to structured remedial approaches. Spelling requires attention to all of the letters, patterns, and sounds in words, and this attention may support decoding. Although we did not originally intend to focus on spelling, we learned from our design studies that spelling problems were important to adults and that they were motivated to learn to spell better. Thus, spelling is integrated with the course in practice exercises and assessments at the end of lessons. The spelling content is always consistent with the patterns and rules in the lessons.

Fluency and Application to Wide Reading

Accurate decoding is not enough for fluent reading. Development of fluency requires practice reading. Fluency practice for younger learners often involves timing the rate of reading, but in our design studies, we found that adults' timing of their reading led them to sacrifice accuracy for speed. Thus, the course includes untimed repeated reading practice. Each lesson concludes

with a brief *smooth reading* passage of 50–75 words that learners read repeatedly in pairs. Prior to this repeated reading, the passage is used to model and practice the multisyllabic decoding strategy. Thus, learners know all of the words in the passage before the fluency practice. It is important for instructors to provide additional practice reading beyond this course to develop fluency.

Progress Monitoring

We recognized that learners would vary in the time required to master the content. Thus, assessments are included with each lesson, and a review lesson is included after about every five lessons. Instructors use the assessments to decide whether to reteach and extend a lesson with the entire group or to provide additional work for individuals.

Summary of Research and Development

The course of study was developed and evaluated as part of a federally funded research study, *Building a Knowledge Base for Teaching Adult Decoding*, jointly supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (5R01HD43798), the National Institute for Literacy, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education of the U.S. Department of Education. During the first two years of the project, components of the course were developed and pilot-tested through design studies that were conducted in ABE classes. Based on feedback from instructors and adult learners and data on adult learning, we designed improved lessons and made decisions about instructional approaches that were most effective. We developed a course of study composed of 40 lessons that subsequently was revised and shortened to 30 lessons.

The course was tested in a large-scale, rigorous experimental study that involved 68 adult reading classes and 34 instructors in 23 adult literacy programs in 12 states across the country (Alamprese, MacArthur, Price, & Knight, in press). All classes were conducted in English and were at the low-intermediate level. Sixteen programs were randomly assigned to receive

either the *Making Sense* course or to continue their existing reading instruction. Seven of the 23 programs were selected because they were already using published decoding curricula; these programs served as an additional comparison group. Learners were pretested and post-tested with 11 reading measures. In addition, extensive information was collected about the learners, instructors, and the operation of the ABE programs to enable analysis of the relationships among learners' characteristics, instructional methods, ABE program characteristics, and learners' development of reading skills.

The final sample of learners with full test results included 349 adults. Two-thirds were women; race/ethnicity was diverse; ages ranged from 16 to 70 years with a mean of 37 years. One-third were born in another country, but all spoke sufficient English to participate in an English-only reading class. Of the U.S.-born learners, about half reported having a learning disability. Average reading comprehension was about the fourth-grade level, and average decoding skill was about the third-grade level. On average, learners participated in about 60 hours of reading instruction over five to six months, but only part of that instructional time was devoted to the *Making Sense* instruction.

Results

Overall, adults in the *Making Sense* classes made significantly greater gains in decoding skills and in spelling than adults in the control classes. Results differed for adults who were born (or educated from an early age) in the U.S. and those who were born in another country. For U.S.-born adults, the *Making Sense* instruction resulted in greater gains for overall word recognition and spelling. However, for non-U.S.-born learners, the *Making Sense* classes actually resulted in lower gains in vocabulary, presumably because of the time devoted to decoding instruction. Overall, for adults in both the *Making Sense* and control groups, non-US learners made greater gains than U.S. learners on decoding, word recognition, and comprehension though not on vocabulary. For full information on the study, see Alamprese, MacArthur, Price, and Knight (in press).

Information for ABE Program Administrators on Program Supports for Implementing *Making Sense*

Findings from adult reading research and the experience of adult reading professional development programs have pointed to the critical role of an ABE program in supporting the implementation of adult reading curricula. The delivery of effective instruction is one component of a system of adult basic education services that must be organized to address the needs of adult learners and maximize the performance of program staff. A program's director should ensure that instructors have the training and ongoing support necessary to use new curricula and should organize classes in terms of schedule and learners' skill levels to facilitate students' participation and learning. The use of diagnostic and monitoring assessments can assist instructors in identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses, planning instruction, and tracking their ongoing progress. As instructors begin to teach a new course, they will need feedback and opportunities to discuss their practices with colleagues. A program's director or instructional coordinator can support instructors through class observations and feedback. In programs where multiple instructors are using a new course, the formation of an instructors' learning community can be a venue for instructors to discuss challenges and successes in teaching (Alamprese, 2009, 2010; STAR, 2007).

For the successful implementation of *Making Sense*, enhancements may be needed in the following four areas of your ABE program's services:

- Professional development for instructors
- Organization of reading classes
- Diagnostic assessment process
- Continuous instructional improvement

Professional Development for Instructors

As a structured course of study with scripted lesson plans, *Making Sense* provides the information that instructors need to conduct a class or course consisting of 30 lessons. It was designed based on the assumption that ABE reading instructors

have a good understanding of the concepts that are taught in the course. Described in the section in this guide on "Foundation Knowledge Needed by Instructors" are the key concepts that instructors who teach *Making Sense* will need to know and be able to explain to adult learners.

ABE programs that choose to implement *Making Sense* will need to provide time for instructors' professional development prior to their use of the course and/or during the instructional period. While no *Making Sense*-specific professional development is available, we believe that instructors with strong background knowledge of the key concepts taught in the course, the capacity to access available resources in professional development, and a willingness to teach the *Making Sense* lessons as written should be successful in using the course. For instructors who need further development of some concepts, the resources provided in this guide should be helpful in strengthening their knowledge.

A key element of preparing for teaching is instructional planning time, and ABE programs implementing *Making Sense* will need to provide resources for instructors to plan. Even the most experienced instructors will need to review the whole course and then each lesson prior to teaching the lesson. The goal is to have instruction that is fluid and coherent, and planning is a key element in enabling instructors to teach in this way.

Organization of Reading Classes

Two aspects of the organization of reading classes are important to consider in planning instruction using *Making Sense*: class entry policy and skill levels of class participants. A structured, sequential course of study such as *Making Sense* is best implemented when adult learners are required to enter the class within a specified time (e.g., by the beginning of week 2), which is known as managed enrollment. This is in contrast to open enrollment, in which learners are allowed to enter a class at any point in a class cycle. Limiting learners' entry point helps to ensure that learners will receive maximum benefit from instruction. Even when learners' entry point is specified, their class participation will include absences, and instructors will need program support in developing strategies for assisting students to learn what was taught in their absence. The instructors who tested *Making Sense*

reported that they worked with learners after class to review key concepts and gave learners the relevant student worksheets to complete at home. When a significant number of learners was absent from a class, the instructor would extend the review segment of a lesson to teach the concept from the previous day. The options for assisting learners will vary, but some accommodation will need to be made to assist learners in accessing the information that they missed.

The learner skill composition of a class is an important factor to consider in using a course that is targeted at a specific skill level. As described previously, *Making Sense* was designed for adults whose reading comprehension skills are between the fourth and seventh grade equivalence. The implementation of *Making Sense* will be optimal when the ABE program limits class enrollment to learners whose comprehension skills fall within this range. To form classes that are homogenous in terms of learners' skill level will require that the program's schedule for pretesting precedes placing learners in a class.

Diagnostic Assessment Process

ABE programs' use of subject-specific diagnostic instruments to supplement the information provided by general literacy assessments is considered an essential step in identifying learners' instructional needs. Suggestions for the types of reading diagnostic instruments that might be used in *Making Sense* classes are described in the section on "Recommendations for Assessment" in this guide.

The use of reading diagnostic assessments may require the development of some new program processes:

- ✦ Identifying and training the staff who will administer the reading diagnostic instruments
- ✦ Setting aside funds to purchase the instruments
- ✦ Developing a schedule for the administration of the instruments
- ✦ Providing professional development for instructors who are using *Making Sense* on how to interpret the results from the reading diagnostic instruments in terms of their implication for instruction.

In some ABE programs, the staff member who administers the reading diagnostic instruments will not be the *Making Sense* reading instructor. In this situation, the staff member who conducts the assessment will need to coordinate with the *Making Sense* instructor in terms of the assessment schedule and the sharing of the assessment results.

Continuous Instructional Improvement

It takes time for instructors to become proficient in the use of new curricula. Even when a course has well-developed lesson plans and learner materials, instructors will need to use the course multiple times before they have integrated the lessons into their own practice.

A number of ABE program-level strategies can support instructors in their use of a new course of study. ABE program directors or instructional coordinators can observe and document the *Making Sense* instructor teaching a class. Prior to observing the class, the observer should have reviewed the *Making Sense* lesson, and during the observation should record the key activities that are conducted during the class session. After the class, the observer should meet with the instructor to discuss what the instructor perceives went well in the class and the parts of the lesson that were challenging. This process will enable the instructor to reflect on his/her own practice and discuss any instructional and class management issues with the observer. When feasible, two observations should be conducted during the first year that an instructor uses *Making Sense* in order to ensure that instructors are progressing in their use of the course.

ABE programs that have multiple instructors using *Making Sense* have an opportunity to form a learning community in which instructors can meet to discuss their implementation of *Making Sense* at a detailed level. As instructors progress through the lessons, it is helpful for them to share their experiences in teaching the lessons and monitoring learners' progress. This opportunity for continuous instructional improvement will benefit the instructors in the short term and the overall quality of the program in the long term.

Foundational Knowledge Needed by Instructors

Although the *Making Sense* lessons are scripted, instructors need a strong understanding of the concepts taught in the course in order to teach the lessons effectively. Prior to the treatment instructors' use of *Making Sense*, the project staff provided three days of professional development to them and were available to answer questions via e-mail at any time.

This section discusses the foundational knowledge needed by instructors to use the course effectively. The intent is not to teach these concepts, but rather to indicate what knowledge is important, and to provide references to books and articles that explain the ideas. ABE programs can use this information to provide professional development for their teachers. At the end of this Teachers' and Administrators' Guide is an annotated list of some books and articles for more information. Instructors might want to work collaboratively in study groups to read some of these resources.

Metalinguistic Knowledge about English Orthography, Phonology, and Morphology

Metalinguistic means "about language."

Orthography refers to the ways that words are spelled and pronounced based on those spellings. Phonology refers to the sounds of words; phonemes are the basic speech sounds. Morphology refers to the meaning units in words, or morphemes. For example, "decomposition" has three morphemes: "de" means opposite; "compose" means to put together; and "tion" changes the verb to a noun.

Instructors need to know why words are spelled the way they are. English spelling is complex but not random. It is complex because English words originate in many languages. It also has to be complex because there are more phonemes (about 44) than letters, so patterns must be used to spell some sounds. It is further complex because words include spelling patterns that represent meaning, not just sound. For example, the vowel sounds in "compose" change when it becomes part of "composition," but the spelling of the base word keeps the two letter "o"s to preserve the meaning. An even simpler example

is that English uses the single morpheme "ed" to mean past tense, even though the pronunciation changes depending on the phonemes in the base word (e.g., jumped, yelled, rented). Keeping the spelling based on meaning might make decoding and spelling harder for beginning readers, but it probably makes fluent reading easier in the long run. Thus, both phonemes and morphemes must be considered in understanding and teaching decoding and spelling in English. Good readers have an implicit understanding of these patterns, as shown by the fact that they can spell complex pseudowords correctly. For learners who have trouble with decoding and spelling, explicit instruction in these patterns is needed.

An excellent explanation of the principles of American English orthography is found in Richard Venezky's book *The American Way of Spelling: The Structure and Origins of American English Orthography* (1999). Although the book is comprehensive, it is also written in an engaging style that is accessible to readers without any special background knowledge. Another excellent resource that explains English orthography, phonology, and morphology for an audience of instructors is *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers* (Moats, 2000).

Developmental Framework for Decoding and Spelling Skills

This understanding of English orthography is consistent with phase theories of spelling and decoding development (Ehri & McCormick, 1998; Templeton & Morris, 2000). From an early pre-alphabetic stage, children move to an *alphabetic* phase in which they learn grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) relationships that enable them to read and spell highly regular words that have one letter per sound; these are basically short-vowel words. In the next *within-word pattern* phase, they must learn about the orthographic patterns required to spell words with vowels other than short vowels, including long vowels, diphthongs, and r-controlled vowels. In the *syllables and affixes* phase, they learn how to decode and spell many multisyllabic words, learning about prefixes and suffixes, syllable division, and spelling rules. Finally, in the *derivational* phase, they learn how morphemes influence spelling and pronunciation in complex multisyllabic words. Understanding

this developmental sequence is extremely helpful for instructors. It assists them in organizing their own understanding of English orthography, and helps them to understand better the developmental phase of their learners so they know what to teach. We recommend the use of developmental spelling tests to assess learners' developmental phase and decide what decoding content to teach. (See section on assessment.)

Some excellent resources for understanding these developmental stages and the use of developmental spelling assessments include an article by Templeton and Morris (1999) and books by Ganske (2000) and Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston (2007).

Basic Phonics Concepts and Terminology

Instructors need to understand basic phonics concepts because those concepts have major instructional implications. For example, they should know the difference between a consonant blend and a consonant digraph. Blends (e.g., "fl") are often difficult to learn because they require blending together two phonemes; in contrast, consonant digraphs (e.g., "ch") just require learning that two letters together make a single sound. Instructors also need to know the various types of vowel sounds and spellings, such as short vowels, long vowels, r-controlled vowels, and diphthongs. Each of these vowel types have different relationships between spelling and sound that must be taught. There are many books that provide coverage of basic phonics concepts; some are listed in the resources at the end of the Teachers' and Administrators' Guide.

Syllable Types and Syllable Division

The *Making Sense* course of study is organized around teaching six syllable types. These six syllable types are used as a system to organize instruction in decoding and spelling. They help adults to learn to decode the patterns used to represent the various types of vowels. Together with a set of principles for dividing complex words into syllables, they help learners to decode and spell multisyllabic words. The six syllable types are as follows:

- Closed (with short vowels, e.g., "flat")
- Open (with long vowels, e.g., "go")

- VCe, or final-e (with long vowels, e.g., "plate")
- R-controlled (the 'r' affects the vowel sound, e.g., "far")
- Vowel digraph (with long vowels or other vowel sounds, e.g., "meat," "loud")
- Cle (only in multisyllabic words, e.g., "turtle")

The six syllable types work together with a set of rules for syllable division to help learners decode multisyllabic words. For example, we divide words into syllables between two consonants (e.g., "bas-ket" gives us two closed syllables with short vowels), and we usually divide words before a single consonant (e.g., "ra-dar" gives us an open syllable with a long-a and an r-controlled syllable). The strategy for decoding multisyllabic words includes these rules as well as other patterns and principles.

Fluency Development

Fluency development is included as a reminder of something that most instructors already appreciate: Learners need a lot of practice to develop fluency in reading, and that fluency is critical to comprehension. In teaching decoding, we never expect that learners will decode more than a few words while they read. Decoding skills are only for unfamiliar or difficult words. Most words need to be read automatically and quickly as sight words. To develop this fluency, learners need a lot of practice reading texts that they can read with fairly good accuracy. They also need practice reading texts that include the kinds of words they are learning to decode. Some fluency practice is built into the *Making Sense* course, but instructors will need to extend this practice to other texts in the rest of their reading instruction. One excellent resource is Rasinski (2003).

Overview of Scope and Sequence of the Course of Study

This section provides an overview of the scope and sequence of the *Making Sense* course of study. The full scope and sequence can be found at the end of this guide. The course follows a developmental sequence, teaching the most

common and useful patterns of words. Decoding of multisyllabic words is taught at every level, and the strategy for decoding multisyllabic words is expanded as new principles are learned.

Lesson 1: Introduction

The first lesson introduces the course as the study of how the English language works and teaches the basic concepts of phonemes and syllables with a few exercises.

Lessons 2–6: Closed syllables with short vowels

These lessons review the short vowel sounds and basic blending (sounding out) procedures. The closed syllable pattern is explained and multisyllabic words composed of closed syllables are divided and decoded. Affixes that are closed syllables also are included. The last lesson in this set and every other set is a review.

Lessons 7–11: Final-e, or VCe syllables and related spelling rules

These lessons introduce the highly reliable VCe, or final-e, pattern for long vowel words. The contrasting spelling rules about dropping the final-e before adding an ending and about doubling the final consonant in closed syllable words are taught.

Lessons 12–15: Open syllables and Cle syllables

These lessons introduce the open syllable pattern with a long vowel. New principles are added to the strategy for decoding multisyllabic words, requiring flexibility when a single consonant comes between vowels. The difficult idea of stressed syllables is introduced along with the concept of the schwa sound. The Cle pattern also is taught.

Lessons 16–19: Words ending in “y” and related spelling rule

These two lessons and review lesson introduce words ending in “y” and the rule for when to change it to an “i” when adding endings. More affixes are introduced and the full strategy for multisyllabic words is covered.

Lessons 20–26: Vowel digraphs and r-controlled vowels

These lessons introduce the most common and reliable vowel pairs. The r-controlled vowels and syllable type are introduced.

Lessons 27–28: Hard and soft sounds of “c” and “g”

These lessons introduce the multiple sounds of “c” and “g.”

Lesson 29–30: Review

These lessons focus on review of the patterns taught and further practice using the strategy for decoding multisyllabic words. The final lesson refers back to the basic linguistic terms taught in Lesson 1.

Lesson Format and Instructional Activities

Except for the review lessons and Lesson 1, all the lessons share a similar lesson format with similar activities. The instructional activities are described below. The order of the activities may be arranged slightly differently to accommodate the concept being taught in any specific lesson.

Overview

The first page of each lesson in the Lesson Plans provides an overview of the objectives and activities in the lesson and alerts the instructor to any materials and preparation that are needed. Note that each activity includes a time estimate to help instructors in planning whether to use more than one session to cover the lesson. These times are estimates only; in the experimental study, instructors varied considerably in how long they spent teaching each lesson.

Objectives

Each lesson is introduced by the objectives for that lesson. The objectives include concepts, or patterns, to be reviewed and new patterns. The objectives appear in both the *Making Sense* Lesson Plans and the Learner Activity Book.

Introduction

Each lesson begins with an introductory statement explaining the objectives of the lesson—what the lesson will be covering and reviewing.

Review

Most lessons review the patterns in the prior lesson or lessons. These reviews permit the instructor and learners to practice previously taught information, clear up any confusion, and prepare

for the introduction of the new pattern. A review section is generally not included in lessons that immediately follow a review lesson. The pace of the review section should be rapid, recognizing that the concepts are being reviewed rather than taught.

Document of the Day

All lessons that introduce new patterns begin with a document—advertisement, store sign, train schedule, letter, etc.—in which words with the new patterns are found. These applications motivate the learning of the pattern and provide an opportunity for the instructor to explain the new pattern in an authentic, adult context.

New Pattern

After the new pattern is introduced by examining words in the *Document of the Day*, the learners are provided exercises that permit them to explore and practice reading and spelling words with the new pattern.

Word Parts

In some lessons, it is helpful to discuss and practice recognizing units smaller than a word. For example, in early lessons there is an emphasis on the sounds in words. In these lessons, learners practice segmenting words into their individual sounds (phonemes). In later lessons, learners concentrate on the orthographic (spelling) patterns in words. They practice recognizing, spelling and combining roots, prefixes, suffixes, and spelling patterns (for example, *ee* and *ea*).

Syllabification

Multisyllabic words are introduced early in the course. Therefore, a strategy for reading multisyllabic words by using context and dividing the word into syllables is presented in the initial lessons. Steps are added to the strategy gradually as learners are introduced to new syllable patterns. The strategy is modeled and practiced in the context of reading brief passages. Emphasis is placed on flexible use of context, syllable patterns, and rules for dividing words into syllables. A reference chart with the steps in the strategy is included as a wall chart, in the Lesson Plans and in the Learner Activity Book.

Progress Check

Each lesson introducing a new pattern includes a *Progress Check*. Depending on the concept taught in the lesson, the *Progress Check* requires either spelling or dividing words into syllables. These 10-item exercises should be completed without assistance from the instructor. These *Progress Checks* should be scored as soon as possible. They should be used to monitor learners' grasp of the current concept and pattern. They can be used to inform future instruction and to individualize practice for learners. They should also be used to provide feedback to learners on their progress.

Smooth Reading Practice

Each lesson ends with a reading passage of approximately 50 words with five to eight target words that exemplify the new patterns taught in the lesson or review recently introduced patterns. The instructor uses the passage to model how to apply the strategy for reading multisyllabic words or other concepts taught in the lesson. Learners practice decoding the target words in context. The instructor models reading the entire passage with expression, and learners practice reading the passage aloud in pairs. This activity is located last so that learners can continue to practice by rereading the passage several times if time permits.

Charts

Five reference charts are included to help learners apply their new knowledge when they read. As new content is taught, more parts of these charts become relevant. The instructor can mark the relevant parts with asterisks. These charts are provided as wall charts, in the appendixes of the Learner Activity Book and Lesson Plans, and as individual bookmarks for learners.

- *Syllable Types*. This chart includes the six syllable types: closed, VCe, open, Cle, r-controlled, and vowel digraph. Each syllable type is briefly explained and several examples are provided.
- *Strategy for Reading Multisyllabic Words*. The strategy includes the following steps:
 - 1) Check the context. Read the rest of the sentence and see if you can figure it out from context.
 - 2) Look for chunks. Is it a compound

word? Is there a prefix or suffix?

- 3) Divide the word and say each syllable.
 - 3a) Underline each vowel or vowel pair.
 - 3b) If there are two or more consonants between vowels, divide between the consonants, keeping blends and digraphs together.
 - 3c) If there is one consonant between the vowels, try dividing before the consonant; if that doesn't work, try dividing after the consonant.
 - 3d) Look for the syllable patterns.
 - 4) Be flexible. Try putting the stress on different syllables.
 - 5) Check the context. Reread the sentence to make sure it makes sense. As each new concept (syllable type, affixes) is introduced, the relevant new step in the strategy is taught.
- *Spelling Rules*. This chart includes the five spelling rules taught in the course.
 - *Common Prefixes and Suffixes*. These two charts list the 18 most common prefixes and 18 most common suffixes with definitions and examples.

Guidelines for Teaching Making Sense

Using the Scripted Lessons

The lessons are scripted to help you in presenting the lessons. However, the scripts are not designed to be read or to confine your teaching. It is critical that you review the lessons thoroughly before teaching them so that you can deliver the content in a natural way and devote most of your attention to listening and responding to your learners. Feel free to expand on the explanations, ask additional questions, provide additional review, and whatever else is needed to promote learning.

Because of the emphasis on metalinguistic knowledge, the course uses quite a bit of terminology. Some terms, such as “short or long vowels,” “soft *c*” and “syllable” are useful

in communicating ideas to learners and should be used whenever needed. Other terms, such as “phoneme” or “morphology,” are less useful for communication and can be intimidating to learners. Use your judgment about when to use substitutes such as “sounds in words” or “major word parts—roots, prefixes, suffixes.”

A moderate to fast pace is suggested. Use your judgment, however, on the pace most appropriate for each lesson. Avoid distractions that are not related to reading and spelling. On the other hand, take opportunities that occur in learners' responses or in the lesson materials to emphasize reading, writing, or spelling issues; why particular words are capitalized; when to write two words as a compound word; and so forth. Note that each activity includes a time estimate to help you in planning whether to use more than one session to cover the lesson. These times are estimates only; in the experimental study, instructors varied considerably in how long they spent on each lesson.

Segmenting and Blending Sounds in Early Lessons

In the earliest stages of learning to decode, students learn to hear the separate sounds (phonemes) in words and blend them together to form words. Segmenting refers to hearing the sounds in a word as when the teacher asks, “What sounds do you hear in ‘bat’?” Blending refers to putting the letter sounds together to form words; this is often called “sounding out” words. Several points about teaching segmenting and blending are important:

The course is focused on learners reading at the low-intermediate level, not beginning readers. Thus, it provides relatively brief instruction in these basic reading skills as a foundation for later work. Learners who need more extensive work on decoding simple alphabetic words will need a different course.

It is critical that instructors be able to pronounce correctly the various phonemes as clearly as possible. Sounds are indicated in the lesson plans by slashes: /b/ means the sound of the letter “b.” We recognize that it is impossible to say any consonant sound without a little bit of vowel sound (e.g., try to say the sound of “b” without making a little “buh”), but it's important to keep the extra sounds to a minimum. A pronunciation

guide for vowel sounds is included in the Lesson Plans document.

A routine for helping learners to blend (or sound out) words may help. One routine is to point to each letter and say the sound, and then slide your finger below the word and blend the sounds together. Thus, in blending the word “bat,” you would say /b/ /a/ /t/ while pointing to the three letters, and then say “bat” while sliding your finger below the word. Learners can copy this routine when they decode words. Another routine is finger tapping, which can be used both for spelling and decoding. Tap your thumb to successive fingers as you say the separate sounds; then tap your thumb to the combined fingers as you say the full word. Both of these routines are common in beginning decoding programs for struggling readers.

Teaching the Strategy for Decoding Multisyllabic Words

Often learners are intimidated by large words and skip them or rely on the context alone to guess at them. The course teaches them the skills they need to decode multisyllabic words. However, this knowledge is of no value if they do not use it when they read. The purpose of the strategy is to give learners a systematic, step-by-step approach to decoding unfamiliar words whenever they are reading. It guides them in applying what they have learned in the course to real reading. To teach strategies effectively, instructors need to consider how to—

- ♦ Explain the individual steps for dividing words into syllables;
- ♦ Model using the strategy;
- ♦ Guide learners in practicing the strategy; and
- ♦ Encourage learners to use the strategy in the rest of their reading.

Teaching the individual steps for dividing words into syllables. The activities in the course called *Syllabification* explain the procedures and rules for dividing words and provide practice. It is important to monitor whether learners understand these procedures. The course builds in some review, but instructors will need to consider

whether additional review and practice is needed. It also is important for instructors to refer to the strategy explicitly when teaching these procedures and rules. For example, when teaching learners to look for prefixes and suffixes and divide them from the base word, the instructor should point to the strategy chart and emphasize this step. Such references help learners to connect the new knowledge about prefixes and suffixes to the strategy.

Explaining and modeling the strategy. A key aspect of strategy instruction is modeling for learners how to use the strategy. Strategies are cognitive procedures, and they are invisible unless the instructor explains the process out loud while doing it. We call this process “thinking aloud.” In the *Smooth Reading* activities, brief scripts are supplied for these “think alouds.” The big idea is that the instructor verbalizes the thought process while using the strategy. Instructors may need to provide more of this think-aloud modeling than is scripted in the course. In particular, it is important to model using the strategy as needed when guiding learners to use it and when encouraging them to apply the strategy to other reading.

Guiding practice of the strategy. In the *Smooth Reading* activities, learners practice use of the strategy with the instructor’s guidance. There are several key elements of guided practice:

- ♦ It is important for learners to explain what they are doing as they use the strategy. If they go ahead and divide the word, even if they are correct, ask them to explain how they used the steps in the strategy to do it. In this way, they practice using the steps for applying the strategy
- ♦ If learners have difficulty, step in and model the strategy for them, helping only with the parts that were problematic. It may be enough to remind them to look at the steps of the strategy. You may need to help them with just part of the strategy, such as looking for a suffix. Or you may need to model the entire strategy. Give them as much support as they need. It is usually better to work with the first learner whom you asked and help him/her rather than to ask another learner

- ✦ When learners use the strategy successfully, praise them for using the strategy and point out that it worked. It is important to help learners see that the strategy worked to build confidence in the strategy and to encourage them to continue to use it.

Supporting use of the strategy in other reading.

Learners will benefit most from the use of the decoding strategy if they apply the strategy in all of their reading. If they only use the strategy during *Making Sense* lessons the benefit of strategy use will be minimized. There are several ways to support learners in using the strategy during other reading activities:

- ✦ Model use of the strategy yourself in other parts of your reading lessons. For example, when you teach vocabulary, you might use the strategy to help pronounce the words. Dividing words into affixes and base words also helps with understanding meaning.
- ✦ When learners need help with a word, prompt them to use the strategy and help them to do so.
- ✦ Ask learners to report when they used the strategy during their independent reading. They might keep a list of multisyllabic words they learned and report how they used the strategy. Learners also can post their words on a class bulletin board as examples. Note that this work can support vocabulary instruction as well as decoding.

Using the strategy flexibly. It is important to teach learners that the strategy will not always work perfectly. Some words are difficult or impossible to divide into syllables that fit the six syllable types. It is possible to divide words in multiple ways. What is critical is whether the strategy helps learners to get close enough to the pronunciation so that they can figure out the word with the help of context. Thus, learners should be taught to use the strategy flexibly, so that they understand that they should not give up on the strategy if it does not work perfectly for some words.

Smooth Reading

The Smooth Reading activities in the course are used both to practice the decoding strategy and to provide fluency practice. For the fluency practice, you should first read the passage with expression at a moderate pace while learners follow along. Then learners work in pairs to read the passage aloud to each other, with the instructor providing help if needed. This fluency practice will work best if learners read the passage to each other several times. The provision of a fluent model and repeated oral reading practice have both been shown to improve fluency. As learners read to each other, you can monitor whether they are able to read it fluently.

If your learners need more support to read the passage fluently, you can add *choral reading* to the routine. After you read the passage once fluently, you and the learners can read the passage again together—chorally. Choral reading provides the most direct support for fluent reading.

It also is important to provide fluency practice at other times during reading instruction. Principles for fluency practice are discussed further in the next section about integrating *Making Sense* with vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

Integrating *Making Sense* with a Comprehensive Reading Course: Suggestions and Guidelines

Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Course of Study is designed as one component of a comprehensive reading course that includes instruction in vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is very important to integrate instruction in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. If instructors use *Making Sense* as an isolated part of their course, it is likely learners will improve their decoding and spelling skills, but it is less likely that they will apply those skills when they read other materials. Instructors need to plan instruction to encourage learners to use their skills and strategies whenever they read. In this section, we offer some suggestions for integrating the contents of *Making Sense* with the rest of your reading course.

Using the Multisyllabic Word Strategy to Apply Decoding Knowledge While Reading

The most important feature of the *Making Sense* course for applying knowledge while reading is the strategy for decoding multisyllabic words. This strategy provides learners with a step-by-step approach for figuring out unfamiliar words. Principles for teaching the strategy were discussed above in the section on Guidelines for Teaching *Making Sense*. As noted there, it is important to explain and model the strategy, provide guided practice and feedback, and support its use in wide reading. In this section, we provide some specific suggestions for supporting use of the strategy during other reading activities in your course and outside of class.

You can model use of the strategy yourself in other parts of your reading lessons. Modeling the strategy is an excellent introductory activity prior to reading a new selection. Introduce the selection as you normally would, discussing the contents and important vocabulary. Then remind the learners about using the strategy and model its use in the beginning of the selection or in some other part of the text that provides good opportunities to demonstrate figuring out large words. Invite learners to help you in applying the strategy—ask them to apply each step along the way.

You can prompt learners to use the strategy when they need help with a word. The charts of syllable types, prefixes and suffixes, and the strategy itself are designed to support this sort of application.

Fluency Practice

Making Sense provides some fluency instruction and practice at the end of each lesson. However, it is not sufficient practice to help learners develop the fluency they need for improved comprehension. We strongly suggest that you include additional fluency practice in your course. Here are a few suggestions based on the research on fluency development:

Oral reading practice has been shown clearly to contribute to improved fluency. One effective method is repeated reading, which is included in the *Making Sense* course. In repeated reading, learners first read the passage with some support to make sure that they can read it accurately. Then they read it several times orally, each time trying

to read it more fluently. Usually, these readings are timed and the times are recorded. In our design studies, we found that timing adult learners may lead them to make more mistakes, so we did not include timing in the course. However, you may find that timing motivates learners. One way to organize repeated reading in a classroom is to use peer-supported reading. Group your learners into pairs and have them read to each other. If one of the pair is a better reader, that learner should read first. Learners should read the passage until they can read it with fluency. The instructor can listen to pairs as they read and evaluate fluency.

Choral reading is an activity in which learners read all together simultaneously with the instructor. Often the instructor reads the passage first while learners follow along. Then they read it one or more times together. This can be followed by independent oral reading.

Integrating Vocabulary Instruction With the Course of Study

The *Making Sense* course does not include vocabulary instruction, but does focus on dividing words into meaningful parts—prefixes, suffixes, and base words—which is a key part of vocabulary instruction. When you teach vocabulary, you can draw on what students are learning in the *Making Sense* course. Many new vocabulary words are multisyllabic and present decoding difficulties as well as issues of meaning. When introducing vocabulary words, you can use the strategy to divide and pronounce them and then discuss the meaning.

Dividing words into affixes and base words also can help learners with understanding meaning. Teaching the meanings of base words is an important aspect of vocabulary instruction. You can model using the strategy to divide the word into syllables and then discuss the meaning based on those parts. For example, you might teach words with the base element “struct,” which refers to building: structure, destruction, restructure, unstructured, instruction.

For some more information on vocabulary instruction that makes use of affixes and base words, see Ganske (2000, 2008), Bear et al. (2007), and Johnston and Bayrd (1998) in the resources list at the end of this Teachers’ and Administrators’ Guide.

Some Recommendations for Assessment

Current assessment practice in ABE focuses on broad assessments of vocabulary and reading comprehension using tests specifically developed for use with adults, such as the *Tests of Adult Basic Education* (TABE) and the *Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System* (CASAS). These measures are used to place learners in appropriate levels of classes and to document the outcomes of instruction. While such tests are important indicators of overall reading functioning and provide general guidance for planning instruction, they may not provide sufficient information about learners' specific skills in decoding and spelling to plan instruction. Even in a class of adults with similar reading comprehension test scores, there is likely to be wide variation in their word recognition, decoding, and fluency. To focus instruction on the needs of learners, teachers need to know specifically what learners can do and what causes them difficulty. Diagnostic assessment as a basis for planning instruction is an important component of reading instruction. In this section, we make recommendations for diagnostic assessment of word recognition, decoding, and spelling.

Diagnostic Assessments of Decoding (Phonics) and Spelling

Assessments of decoding and spelling skills are directly related to *Making Sense*. The course of study follows a scope and sequence based on the typical development of decoding skill beginning with a review of words with short vowels in lessons 2-6 and continuing with the most common and useful spelling patterns of English. If your diagnostic assessment finds that a learner does not know the consonant and short vowel sounds or has great difficulty reading and spelling simple words with short vowels, then you should be alert to the possibility that the learner will need more intensive beginning phonics instruction than provided in *Making Sense*. Otherwise, you should make note of the skills a student needs to learn so that you can anticipate which lessons will be review and which will be presenting unfamiliar word patterns. One useful way to summarize learner performance is to note for each type of

word pattern (phonics skill) whether the learner has mastered it (very few mistakes in decoding and spelling), has partial mastery (shows some understanding but makes many mistakes), or has little understanding (no evidence of using the pattern). Both of the assessments recommended here provide ways to summarize learners' knowledge.

We have included one assessment that includes decoding skills through reading words and pseudowords and one that asks learners to spell words. Decoding and spelling draw on the same knowledge about the sounds and letter patterns in words. Thus, both types of assessment can be used together. Diagnostic spelling assessments like the ones listed here provide information that is useful in planning decoding instruction as well as spelling instruction.

- **Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR).** This individually administered test provides assessments in 9 areas: print awareness, phonological awareness, letters and sounds, word recognition, word analysis, oral reading accuracy and fluency, silent reading comprehension, spelling, and word meaning. It was developed for use with learners from elementary school through adulthood.
- **Ganske's Developmental Spelling Inventory.** Developmental spelling inventories ask learners to spell words representing the various orthographic patterns in English (e.g., alphabetic words with short vowels, words with VCe patterns, words with affixes). They are used to plan instruction in decoding as well as spelling because they show what learners know about how words are spelled and pronounced. This assessment has a highly structured scoring system that makes it easy to use without special knowledge. The test and scoring guides are included in the book cited in the reference list.

Diagnostic Assessments of Reading Accuracy and Fluency

The purpose of teaching decoding and spelling is to improve the accuracy and fluency of reading. The *Making Sense* lessons include some limited fluency practice, and as the Teachers' and Administrators'

Guide explains, it is important for teachers to provide additional practice reading to develop fluency. Thus, we suggest assessing learners' oral reading accuracy and fluency as part of the diagnostic assessment. By listening to students read and marking their errors, teachers can learn what learners do when they do not immediately recognize a word. They can also identify students who read relatively accurately but slowly and, thus, need more practice reading to develop fluency.

- ♦ Gray Oral Reading Tests, Fourth Edition (GORT-4). This test measures oral reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension. Measuring rate, or fluency, is important because slow reading can interfere with comprehension.
- ♦ Bader Reading and Language Inventory. This test is an informal reading inventory designed for use with adults. Informal reading inventories provide graded word lists for assessing word recognition in isolation and graded passages for assessing word recognition in context and comprehension. The scores for the word lists and for accuracy of oral reading of passages are useful measures of learners' overall word recognition ability. The Bader also includes brief phonics assessment.

Monitoring Progress Regularly During Instruction

It is important to assess learners periodically to determine how well they are learning the material in the course. The *Making Sense* course includes *Progress Check* assessments to use in determining learners progress in decoding and spelling words. Each lesson that introduces new content includes an assessment of whether learners understood and can apply the new pattern taught in the lesson. In addition, each review lesson includes a review assessment of the material taught in that section.

Special Considerations for Non-native English Speakers

Making Sense can be used with both native speakers of English and non-native speakers who have sufficient command of English to be placed in

an English reading class. The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth concluded that school-age English learners (ELs) benefit from the same kind of systematic, explicit instruction in phonics that as native speakers (Shanahan & Beck, 2006). In our study, 30 percent of the adults were born and educated in another country. In this study, as well as in a large descriptive study (Alamprese, 2009), non-native ABE learners were found to make more rapid progress in decoding than native English learners.

At the same time, non-native speakers have somewhat different needs. In particular, they need more vocabulary instruction. We found that non-native speakers in the control group made more vocabulary growth. It is important not to overemphasize decoding instruction to the exclusion of vocabulary learning. In addition, non-native speakers' more limited knowledge of vocabulary may present challenges in teaching decoding. Decoding large words often depends on getting close to the correct pronunciation using decoding skills and then recognizing the word, which can be difficult for learners who do not know that word.

The language and literacy background of non-native speakers also has an effect on their learning. The age at which they came to the U.S. can make a difference. Adults who came to this country and participated in schooling in English during elementary school present patterns of reading skills that are more similar to native speakers than to adults who immigrated as adolescents or adults (Strucker, Yamamoto, & Kirsch, 2007). Literacy skills and schooling in their native language also make a difference in how readily they learn to read in English (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003). It also matters which native language they speak and read. Adults who already read in a language with the Roman alphabet have an advantage over those who use a non-Roman alphabet, such as Arabic, and those whose language uses a nonalphabetic system, such as Chinese.

Recommendations Regarding Non-Native English Speakers

Learner Background. We recommend that programs systematically survey learners who were not born in the U.S. about their language, literacy,

and schooling background. Questions should address birthplace, age at immigration to the U.S., first language and current home language, years of schooling in the native country and the U.S., and literacy skills in the native language. One sample questionnaire is available at http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/MC_Questionnaire.htm

Pronunciation Issues. Non-native speakers often use nonstandard pronunciation. In some cases, pronunciation issues are related to differences in letter-sound relationships in the native language and English. For example, the course presents *i-r*, *e-r* and *u-r* as representing one sound in the words *bird*, *nerd* and *curd*. Speakers of Spanish may pronounce them with three different sounds. Pronunciation issues require awareness and flexibility from the instructor and learners. Few instructors have detailed knowledge of pronunciation and spelling differences across languages (and dialects of English), but that is not necessary. It can be helpful to discuss pronunciation issues with learners, by working as a group to figure out how language differences might (or might not) affect the patterns that are being taught. *Making Sense* is presented as an exploration of English spelling and decoding patterns, so it is natural to involve learners in thinking about how language differences affect pronunciation.

Vocabulary. As noted above, non-native speakers need more instruction in vocabulary. The recommendations in the section on integrating vocabulary instruction with *Making Sense* should work equally well for non-native speakers.

Scope and Sequence of *Making Sense*

Lesson 1: Introduction

The first lesson introduces the course as the study of how the English language works and teaches the basic concepts of phonemes and syllables with a few exercises.

Lessons 2–6: Closed Syllables with Short Vowels

These lessons review the short vowel sounds and basic blending (sounding out) procedures. The closed syllable pattern is explained and multisyllabic words composed of closed syllables are

divided and decoded. Affixes that are closed syllables are also included. The lessons also introduce the first two spelling rules for doubling the final *s*, *f*, *l* in one-syllable CVC words and spelling the sounds of *k*, *j* and *ch* at the end of CVC syllables. The last lesson in this part and every other part is a review.

Lesson 2: Short *a* and *e* in CVC Syllables

Lesson 3: Short *i*, *o* and *u* in CVC Syllables

Lesson 4: Syllable Division With
CVC Syllables

Lesson 5: Prefixes and Suffixes That Are
CVC Syllables

Lesson 6: Review

Lessons 7–11: Final-e, or VCe Syllables and Related Spelling Rules

These lessons introduce the highly reliable VCe, or final-e, pattern for long vowel words. The contrasting spelling rules about dropping the final-e before adding an ending and about doubling the final consonant in closed syllable words are taught. Syllabification and affixes are extended to include the new pattern.

Lesson 7: Long Vowels in VCe Words

Lesson 8: Dropping the Final *e* Prior to a Suffix

Lesson 9: Doubling the Final Consonant
in CVC Syllables

Lesson 10: Variations on the Final-e Pattern

Lesson 11: Review

Lessons 12–15: Open Syllables and Cle Syllables, Stress and Schwa

These lessons introduce the open syllable pattern with a long vowel. New principles are added to the strategy for reading multisyllabic words, requiring flexibility when a single consonant comes between vowels. The difficult idea of stressed syllables is introduced along with the concept of the schwa sound. The Cle pattern is also taught.

Lesson 12: The Cle Pattern

Lesson 13: Open Syllables

Lesson 14: Stress and Schwa

Lesson 15: Review

Lessons 16–19: Words Ending in y and Related Spelling Rule

These two lessons and review lesson introduce words ending in y and the rule for when to change it to an i when adding endings. More affixes are introduced and the full strategy for multisyllabic words is covered.

Lesson 16: Sounds of y; Words Ending in y and ey

Lesson 17: Changing y to i When Adding a Suffix

Lesson 18: Prefixes and Suffixes

Lesson 19: Review

Lessons 20–26: Vowel Digraphs and R-controlled Vowels

These lessons introduce the most common and reliable vowel pairs. The r-colored vowels and syllable type are introduced.

Lesson 20: Digraph Vowels (ai, ay, ee, ey)

Lesson 21: Digraph Vowels (oa, ou, ow)

Lesson 22: Digraph Vowels (oi, oy, oo)

Lesson 23: Digraph Vowels (ea)

Lesson 24: Syllables With r-Controlled Vowels

Lesson 25: Syllables With r-Controlled Vowels; Suffixes -or and -ard

Lesson 26: Review

Lessons 27–28: Hard and Soft Sounds of c and g

These lessons introduce the multiple sounds of c and g.

Lesson 27: Soft and Hard Sounds of c

Lesson 28: Soft and Hard Sounds of g

Lesson 29–30: Review

These lessons focus on review of the patterns taught and further practice using the strategy for reading multisyllabic words. The final lesson

reviews the role of phonology and orthography in reading and spelling words and celebrates the completion of the lessons and the students' accomplishments.

Lesson 29: Review

Lesson 30: Grand Finale

Some Resources and References

Some Resources on Decoding, Spelling, and Fluency for Professional Development

Bear, D. R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2007). *Words their way* (4th ed.). Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall.

Similar to the publication by Ganske (2000), this book explains the structure of English orthography and the typical developmental sequence of learning about decoding. Like Ganske, it also includes developmental spelling inventories that can be used for diagnostic assessment, as well as instructional methods and activities that might be used to supplement the *Making Sense* course. In particular, it has information that might be helpful in integrating decoding and vocabulary instruction. Note that these authors also have separate books targeted on students at the various stages of development.

Ganske, K. (2000). *Word journeys: Assessment guided phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford.

This book explains the structure of English orthography and the typical developmental sequence for learning about decoding and spelling and their relationship to vocabulary learning. It also includes an excellent assessment tool for diagnostic assessment that uses spelling to assess the developmental stage of students.

Ganske, K. (2008). *Mindful of words: Spelling and vocabulary explorations 4–8*. New York: Guilford.

Based on an understanding of the development of knowledge about the phonology and morphology of English words, this book provides methods and activities for developing spelling and vocabulary skills. The information might be useful in integrating decoding and vocabulary instruction.

Johnson, K., & Bayrd, P. (1998). *Megawords: Multisyllabic words for reading, spelling, and vocabulary*. Cambridge, MA: Educational Publishing Services.

This book can assist individuals in understanding the structure of multisyllabic words including how to divide words so that they can read them. It would be a good source for additional words to use with learners who need more practice.

Moats, L. (2000). *Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

This book explains the structure of spoken and written English and the connections among language structure and how people learn to read. It explains the phonology of English; that is, the sounds that make up words, and orthography; that is, how words are spelled. It covers all the elements of phonics that are important for teaching reading. It provides detailed explanations.

Rasinski, T. (2003). *The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension*. New York: Scholastic.

This book provides excellent explanations of multiple methods for developing reading fluency. The explanations are clear and easy to implement. Though written with younger students in mind, many of the activities are applicable to adult learners.

Templeton, S., & Morris, D. (1999). Theory and research into practice: Questions teachers ask about spelling. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34, 102–113.

This article provides a brief and accessible answer to the basic question, “Why are English words spelled the way they are?” It acknowledges the historical influences of the multiple languages that influenced English from Anglo-Saxon and French to Latin and Greek. It also explains how English spelling is influenced not only by letter-sound relationships but also by the patterns of letters and by morphemes, or meaning units. It lays out the typical developmental progression from learning about the alphabetic principle to learning about patterns needed to spell the many vowels in the language to learning about how meaning influences spelling.

Venezky, R. L. (1999). *The American way of spelling: The structure and origins of American English orthography*. New York: Guilford.

As the title indicates, this book explains the structure and origins of American English orthography. The book is comprehensive and provides more information than instructors need. However, it is also written in an engaging style that is accessible to readers without any special background knowledge. It explains the major patterns in English orthography and provides historical explanations for many of the varied patterns.

Some Assessment References

Bader, L. A. (2002). *Reading and Language Inventory* (4th ed.). NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Ganske, K. (2000). *Word Journeys: Assessment Guided Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary Instruction*. New York: Guilford.

Roswell, F. G., Chall, J. S., Curtis, M. E., & Kearns, G. (2005). *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading* (2nd ed.). Rolling Meadows, IL: Riverside Publishing.

Weiderholt, J. L., & Bryant, B. R. (2001). *Gray Oral Reading Tests* (4th ed.) (GORT-4). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Other References

Alamprese, J. A., MacArthur, C. A., Price, C., & Knight, D. (in press) Effects of a structured decoding curriculum on adult literacy learners’ reading development. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*.

Alamprese, J. (2010). *Findings on teacher development: Study of the implementation of the Oregon adult basic skills transition to postsecondary education and work (OPABS) curricula*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Denver, CO.

Alamprese, J.A. (2009). Developing learners' reading skills in adult basic education programs. In S. Reder & J. Bynner (Eds.), *Tracking adult literacy and numeracy skills: Findings from longitudinal research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Burt, M., Peyton, J. K., & Adams, R. (2003). *Reading and adult English language learners: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education and Center for Applied Linguistics.

Shanahan, T., & Beck, I. L. (2006). Effective literacy teaching for English language learners. In D. August & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth* (pp. 415-488). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Strucker, J., Yamamoto, K., & Kirsch, I. (2007, March). *The relationship of the component skills of reading to IALS performance: Tipping points and five classes of adult literacy learners*. Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL).

Student Achievement in Reading (STAR). (2007). *STAR toolkit*. Arlington, VA: DTI Associates. Accessed from <http://www.startoolkit.org>, June 14, 2010.

Ehri, L. C., & McCormick, S. (1998). Phases of word learning: Implications for instruction with delayed and disabled readers. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 14(2), 135–163.

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD VENEZKY
MENTOR, TEACHER, AND RESEARCHER
1938–2004



Dr. Venezky was a pioneer in explaining how American English works and how adults learn to improve their reading and spelling. He initiated the work that led to *Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Course of Study*.