

Practitioner Research Training Guide:

Research-based Adult Reading Instruction

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National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

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ABOUT PRACTITIONER RESEARCH TRAINING

Who created this practitioner research training?

This *Practitioner Research Training Guide* was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The guide is part of NCSALL's effort to help connect research and practice in the field of adult education and family literacy. The *Practitioner Research Training Guide: Research-based Adult Reading Instruction* is one of a series of teaching and training materials that NCSALL has developed.

Why was this practitioner research training created?

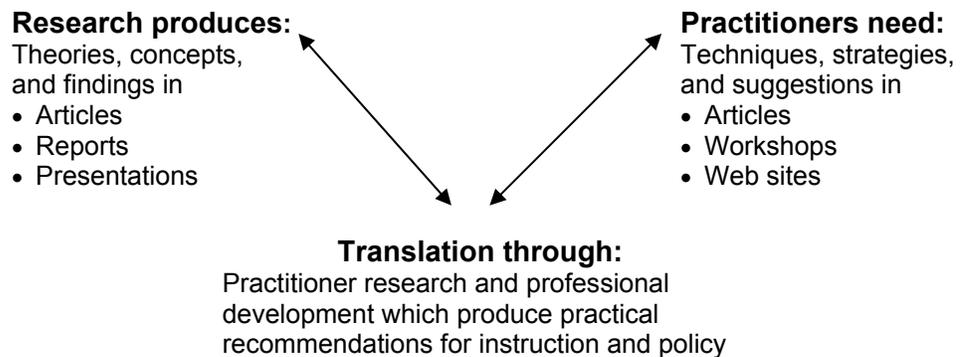
The purpose of this guide is to help professional developers and others organize and conduct professional development that helps practitioners read and discuss research, and plan and conduct their own classroom research related to reading, with the goal of improving their reading instruction practice. Facilitators of the practitioner research training should have experience conducting research or access to a researcher for advice to adequately support the participants during the training.

NCSALL developed this guide to facilitate practitioner research on reading for a group of Minnesota practitioners. After a successful pilot year, the guide was revised and used by Minnesota facilitators, Bella Hanson and Marn Frank, for a second year of practitioner research on reading. This version of the guide is based on these pilots that were funded by the Minnesota Department of Education.

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research (both university-based and practitioner research). We want to ensure that practitioners—teachers, counselors, program administrators, and others—have an opportunity to access, understand, judge, and use research in their work. Therefore, the goal of the NCSALL practitioner research training is to help adult basic education practitioners, in a small group setting, learn about research findings, theories, and concepts

from NCSALL’s research and discuss how these can be applied to practice and policy in adult education.

When we have talked to practitioners in the field of adult literacy about research, they ask for techniques, strategies, and practical suggestions that they can use immediately. Yet, research often produces reports, articles, and other documents that provide primarily theories, concepts, ideas, and sometimes implications for practice. NCSALL feels that there should be a process that “translates” research findings into practical suggestions and that practitioners should be involved in that process. The prime vehicles for translating research into practical suggestions for practitioners are professional development activities, such as practitioner research training, and study circles, where practitioners can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:



What is practitioner research training?

Practitioner research training is a professional development activity for practitioners (teachers, tutors, counselors, support staff, and program administrators) in programs that provide adult students with adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education services. The practitioner research training uses the format depicted in the chart below:

<p>Session 1 Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify a research question ▪ Explore key principles and steps in practitioner research ▪ Learn about research on reading ▪ Discuss instructional practices that they can investigate in their own practice 	<p>Session 2 Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss research that they have read ▪ Learn about and design data collection methods ▪ Develop a plan and timeline for their own research ▪ Learn about writing about their own research project 	<p>Session 3 Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn about strategies for analyzing data ▪ Begin to analyze their own data ▪ Develop a plan to analyze data ▪ Prepare for writing a research brief and presentation 	<p>Session 4 Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share the results of their own practitioner research ▪ Seek feedback and perspectives of others ▪ Draft a report on research
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What should the outcomes of the practitioner research training be?

First, we hope that practitioners learn more about what the research says about reading instruction and come away with ideas and individual plans of action for how to apply what they've learned in their own classrooms and programs.

Second, we hope that the practitioners complete a research project on a reading topic. We expect them to produce a report on the research that can be shared with others.

If participants leave the group with a plan for further research, the practitioner research training is a success.

Who should participate?

The practitioner research training is designed for any practitioner who works in an adult education program: teachers, program directors, counselors, volunteers, or others. It is broad enough to be of interest to ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners in a variety of delivery sessions: community-based organizations, local educational authorities, libraries, correctional facilities, etc. The

design of the practitioner research training and the readings should be appropriate for both new and experienced practitioners; however, some of the readings may have acronyms that may need to be reviewed with participants.

The practitioner research training is designed for approximately 8 to 15 participants. We don't recommend running a practitioner research training with fewer than 5 or more than 15 participants, as discussions are harder to facilitate with too few or too many participants.

How long is the practitioner research training?

The practitioner research training is designed for 31 hours, divided into four sessions. While times vary by number of participants, we estimate that the first two sessions are 10 hours each, the third is 7 hours, and the last 4 hours (plus any presentations made to outside audiences.) This guide describes the training based on holding each of the first two sessions over two days. However, with some modifications and a smaller number of participants, the first two sessions could each be held in one full day.

We recommend that the first two sessions be scheduled no more than two to three weeks apart, the third session about two months later, and the final session two to three months after that. This gives participants time to conduct and document their classroom research between the sessions.

How do I recruit participants?

NCSALL has produced a sample flyer that provides information about this NCSALL practitioner research training, which you can find on page 7. The flyer presents an overview of the topic and a brief description about what will be covered in each of the sessions. It also includes a registration form for practitioners to mail back to you.

You are welcome to use the flyer to send out via mail or on a Web site to let practitioners know when and where the practitioner research training will be taking place. Or, you can create your own flyer, using the NCSALL flyer as an example.

How do I select dates for the practitioner research training?

Select all four dates for the four sessions at the very beginning and advertise them in the recruitment flyer. Only people who can make all four dates will, in all likelihood, sign up to attend the practitioner research training.

In general, it is best to have the four dates regularized (e.g., all on Tuesday or all on Friday), as someone who is free at a certain time of the week is more likely to have that same time free every week.

How do I organize the first session?

When you feel that you have solid commitments from the number of participants you are seeking, contact them to confirm their participation in the practitioner research training. At this time, reconfirm the times, dates, and location of the practitioner research training with the participants.

As mentioned above, this practitioner research training has been designed for a group of practitioners to meet over four sessions, with each session being one to two days long. Because four sessions' worth of time is such a limited period for a group to meet, we suggest that several short readings and a brief cover letter with information about the practitioner research training be sent to practitioners to read before the first session.

After confirming their participation, send each participant the packet of information and materials to read before the first session (Pre-Meeting Packet of readings and handouts on pages 21-42). Participants need to receive this packet at least 10 days before the first session of the study circle.

You, as the facilitator, will also want to review the entire guide and read over the Pre-Meeting Packet so that you are ready for the first session and for questions that participants may have. You need to be familiar with all of the readings and/or reading research.

Be sure that you arrive early for each session in order to set up the room; arrange your newsprint; and organize handouts, pens, tapes, etc. It's nice to have some sort of refreshment, such as juice, coffee, or water. Check out where the restrooms are so you can tell participants where they are located, and make sure the heating or cooling in the room is appropriate.

Always bring at least two or three extra copies of the readings for participants who forget to bring their own. You should have (or compile during the first session) a list of participants and their telephone numbers or e-mail addresses so participants can contact one another during the course of the practitioner research training.

What kind of support can I expect?

If you want to discuss the practitioner research training beforehand with someone from NCSALL, we'd be happy to do so. We can be reached at:

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We'd love to hear how it went so that we can improve this and other practitioner research trainings we produce in the future. We welcome your feedback about how this NCSALL practitioner research training guide worked and how it could be improved. Contact us (telephone, e-mail, or letter) and tell us how it went and what you'd do differently next time.

(SAMPLE FLYER)

**Practitioner
Research
Training on
Research-
based Adult
Reading
Instruction**

**Interested in conducting practitioner research
about how to teach reading to adults?**

Questions about what research says about teaching adults how to read are particularly relevant as programs and teachers struggle with choosing the most effective ways to develop adults' reading skills. **[insert name of your organization]** is sponsoring a practitioner research training to engage ABE, ASE, and ESOL practitioners in trying out instructional strategies related to reading.

In this practitioner research training, you investigate a problem related to reading. You, together with 7 to 14 other practitioners, will meet four times to:

- Discuss the research on reading instruction for adults and what it means for reading instruction.
- Plan for conducting research in your own classroom on a reading problem or issue.
- Share your research findings and conclusions and the implications.

The practitioner research training is organized into four sessions of one to two days each. We ask that you attend all four sessions and conduct research in your classroom.

Session One: Explore some of the key principles and steps in practitioner research. Learn about the research on reading and discuss instructional strategies that you can investigate in your classroom or practice.

Session Two: Learn about data collection methods. Decide on and design activities through which you will collect the information or evidence needed to answer your research question.

Session Three: Learn about tools and strategies for analyzing data. Begin to work with data. Develop a plan and a timeline to analyze and interpret data.

Session Four: Share the results of your research. Discuss the significance of your findings, conclusions, and the implications for practice. Seek the feedback and perspectives of others. Draft a research paper, summarizing each stage of the research process.

Practitioner research is a staff development activity. Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) or Professional Development Points (PDPs) may be available.

The dates and locations of the four practitioner research training sessions are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

If you would like to join the practitioner research training, please complete this form and send it to: **[insert facilitator's name]**, **[insert facilitator's address]** by **[insert deadline]**. I can also be reached at **[insert facilitator's phone number]** and **[insert facilitator's e-mail]**.

Name: _____ Position: _____

Home address: _____

Home telephone: _____ Work telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

ABOUT THE RESEARCH–BASED ADULT READING INSTRUCTION PRACTITIONER RESEARCH TRAINING GUIDE

What is the practitioner research training guide?

This guide includes all of the information and materials you will need to conduct the practitioner research training, including:

- A page listing the preparations you need to make before each session. This includes the newsprints to be made, the handouts and readings to photocopy, and the materials to bring.
- A step-by-step guide of the activities for each session and the approximate time for each activity, as well as facilitator notes and other ideas for conducting the activities. Handouts and readings, ready for photocopying, are included at the end of each session.

The following materials, which participants will need to read or review, are not included in this training guide. Obtain one copy of each of these for participants to preview during the sessions, and invite participants to obtain their own copies, if desired, by downloading or purchasing them.

- *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction* (order paper copy from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) at (800) 228-8813 or download free from the NIFL Web site at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/adult_ed_02.pdf)
- *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers* (download free from the NIFL Web site at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/applyingresearch.pdf)
- *Understanding What Reading Is All About* (Order paper copy at \$10.00/copy on the NCSALL Web site at

www.ncsall.net/?id=674, or download free from the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/uwriaa.pdf)

- *The Adult Reading Toolkit: A Research-Based Resource for Adult Literacy* (order paper copy at \$40.00/copy from the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of Minnesota at (952) 922-8374, or download order form at www.ldaminnesota.org/programs/educational_products.html#art)
- *Creating Authentic Materials and Activities for the Adult Literacy Classroom: A Handbook for Practitioners* (order paper copy at \$10.00/copy on the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net/?id=674, or download free from the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/jacobson.pdf)

It is important that discussions and activities meet the needs of all group members. As the facilitator, you need to be flexible and may need to modify some activities to fit the needs and learning styles of participants. This practitioner research training guide should be used as a *guide*, not a rigid script.

How is the guide organized?

There are two main sections in this guide:

1. The introduction *About Practitioner Research Training* and *About the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Practitioner Research Guide* that you are reading now
2. *Steps for Facilitating the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Practitioner Research Training*, which include:
 - *To Do Before Session One*
 - *Steps for Facilitating Session One, Handouts for Session One, and Readings Assigned for Session Two*
 - *Steps for Facilitating Session Two, Handouts for Session Two, and Readings Assigned for Session Three*

- *Steps for Facilitating Session Three and Handouts for Session Three*
- *Steps for Facilitating Session Four*

The steps include how-to instructions for conducting all the activities in each session and:

- the newsprints that need to be prepared beforehand, denoted by the icon  and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being underlined
- the handouts that need to be photocopied beforehand, denoted by the icon  and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being *italicized*
- the readings to be photocopied and handed out to read before the next session, denoted by the icon  and their titles are always indicated in the steps by being **bolded**

All handouts for each session and readings for the following session can be found at the end of the “Steps for Facilitating...” that session. For example, the readings to be discussed in Session Two are provided at the end of the “Steps for Facilitating Session One.”

Every session includes an evaluation activity to conduct at the end to get feedback from the participants about what was useful and what could be improved.

At the end of each session, there is a “Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating...” each session, which you can pull out of the notebook and take to the session as an easy reference guide for conducting each activity in that session. It looks like this:

Quick Reference Sheet for Facilitating Session One	
1. Welcome and Introductions	<i>10mins., WHOLE GROUP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone introduces themselves. • Housekeeping and logistics. 	

What if I want to change the activities listed in the guide?

This guide is intended to help first-time facilitators who want a lot of guidance. It is, however, not intended to be a script that must be followed. If you have a different idea for how to do an activity, you should use it. To help you, throughout the steps, we have included the following features:

Another Idea

(sample)

Another Idea for several of the activities, which look like the sample at left when you see them in the steps

Note to Facilitator, which look like the sample box at left when you see them in the steps

Questions to prompt discussion are provided for you throughout the guide, and they look like this when you see them in the steps:

? How would you...?

What's the focus of the Research-based Adult Reading Instruction Practitioner Research Training?

This 31-hour NCSALL practitioner research training is based on recent research and resources about adult reading instruction. The research and related resources include:

- A review of adult reading research conducted by a panel of experts called the Reading Research Working Group, published in a report by John Kruidenier entitled *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*
- Two NCSALL studies on adults' reading profiles (their strengths and needs in the four components of reading)
- A study on adults' reading practices, and the classroom materials and activities that help them increase the type and amount of reading they do in daily life, by NCSALL's Victoria Purcell-Gates
- Resources to help teachers with reading instruction strategies, such as Equipped for the Future Hot Topics, the

Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles Web site, NCSALL Teaching Materials (*Understanding What Reading Is All About*), and resources from the Partnership for Reading at NIFL (*Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers and Teaching Adults to Read*)

How are the four sessions in this practitioner research training organized?

In Session 1, practitioners are introduced to new reading research, learn about the practitioner research process, and begin to define their own research questions.

The **objectives for the first session** state that, by the end of Session One, participants will be able to:

- Generate research questions or problems
- Outline the steps for conducting research
- Explain the component skills of reading and strategies for teaching them
- List sources of data and/or how to collect data
- Name hindrances to and supports for conducting research

The **main activities in Session 1** include:

1. Welcome to Day One and Introductions
2. Objectives and Agenda
3. What You Want to Know About Reading Instruction
4. Teachers and Research
5. Guiding Principles: The Penny Activity
6. Practitioner Research Road Map and Project Timeline
7. Understanding the Research on Reading
8. Welcome to Day Two and Agenda Review
9. Jigsaw Activity: Activities to Teach the Components of Reading

10. Other Resources and Research on Reading: Homework
11. Reflecting on a Problem to Develop Your Research Question
12. Developing Your Research Question: Sharing With a “Critical Friend”
13. What Is Data?
14. Strategizing Supports and Hindrances
15. Supporting Each Other
16. Evaluation of the Session

In Session 2, the participants decide on their project and plan how they will carry it out.

The **objectives for the second session** state that, by the end of Session Two, participants will be able to:

- Explain recent research on adult reading
- Specify the reading instructional strategy to use as an intervention in their own research projects
- Determine data collection methods for their research
- Utilize two types of writing for research
- Construct an action plan and timeline for their research projects
- Discuss their research and training experiences

The **main activities in Session 2** include:

1. Welcome to Day One, Introductions, and Restatement of Research Questions
2. Review of the ARCS and EFF Hot Topics
3. Focus on Reading Instructional Strategies
4. Welcome to Day Two and Agenda Review
5. Focus on Data Collection

6. Focus on Writing About Your Research
7. Focus on Developing a Plan and Timeline
8. Touching Base: Where Are You Now?
9. Preparing for Session Three and Evaluation of the Session

Session 3 focuses on the data that participants have collected – what have they done and what do they know about the effects.

The **objectives for the third session** state that, by the end of Session Three, participants will be able to:

- Explain quantitative and qualitative data analysis
- Analyze the data for their research projects
- Prepare data analysis plans
- Write research project reports
- Discuss experiences as practitioner researchers

The **main activities in Session 3** include:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Focus on Your Research Experience So Far as an Introduction to Qualitative Analysis
3. An Introduction to Quantitative Data Analysis
4. Taking Stock of Our Data
5. Individual Data Analysis and Planning
6. Next Steps in Writing
7. Preparing for the Final Session and Presentations
8. Evaluation of the Session

The **final session** is designed to give participants the opportunity to share their research with each other and with other practitioners. You may want to schedule this session to coincide with a state or regional meeting. If participants want

follow-up meetings after the last session, they can set that up during the last session.

The **objectives for the fourth session** state that, by the end of Session Four, participants will be able to:

- Present research projects and findings
- Evaluate their experiences as practitioner researchers
- Develop next steps as practitioner researchers

The **main activities in Session 4** include:

1. Welcome and Poster Sharing
2. Review of Research Findings and Experiences
3. Plan Panel Presentation
4. Planning Next Steps
5. Evaluation