

# EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)<sup>13</sup>

## LITERACY/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### Introduction

The educational functioning level (EFL) descriptors for Literacy/English Language Arts are intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. They are divided into six EFLs: Beginning Literacy; Beginning Basic; Low Intermediate; High Intermediate; Low Adult Secondary; and High Adult Secondary. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at any given level but provide examples of the most critical concepts and skills for the level. The descriptors use the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education (CCR) as the foundation.

While these narrative descriptors address the most critical concepts for assessment and instruction for adult learners, lesson plans and test items should be based on additional critical concepts from State instructional frameworks and standards, as appropriate for the learner and State requirements.

The EFLs for Literacy/English Language arts are organized into reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language domains. Emphasis was placed on reading and writing because most instruction and assessment attention will be paid to these domains for ABE students. In addition, the descriptors were further informed by OCTAE's Framework for Employability Skills to ensure the levels paid adequate attention to workforce preparation.

### Reading

The reading sections of the descriptors are consistently more comprehensive than the other domains. Reading is a critical area for college and career readiness. One of the elements in the reading descriptors that draws clear distinctions between competencies required at each level is the complexity of the text that students are to be reading. The EFLs specify a staircase of increasing text complexity for students to master from beginning basic reading through the college and career readiness level. The comprehension skills of reading are to be applied to level-appropriate complex text. The reading domain elements of the descriptors carry within it references to other key skills from the other domains and workforce preparation skills. Examples of this include listening comprehension as a supplement to reading comprehension at levels 1 and 2 so students can work with the richer ideas adult students can handle intellectually, if not yet independently through their own reading. It also includes integrating and evaluating information from a variety of media, including translating quantitative or technical information presented visually or in words. Learning to work with diverse media is an important job skill as well as a critical applied academic skill. Another example is an emphasis on research that

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includes a combination of reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills—again as a way to connect the domains in important ways and to create the EFLs as a focused and useful document.

## Writing

Details about the level of writing proficiency required at each level have been pared to draw clear distinctions between competencies required at each level. The descriptors emphasize writing arguments and writing to inform and explain from Level 3 and beyond. Both writing types stress writing to sources, and asking students to draw evidence from texts is emphasized in the descriptors. With writing, many of the process standards were not included because process proficiency is hard to measure. In addition, reference is consistently made to research skills in both the reading and writing sections of each level, as these skills are important to writing.

## Speaking and Listening

The speaking and listening descriptors at each level were connected closely to workforce preparation and the Employability Skills Framework. These skills have the benefit of both being measurable and clearly related to citizenship, work, and life success. Collaborative conversations and teamwork are emphasized at *every* level, as is students' use of evidence. In this context of speaking and listening, the descriptors reflect use of listening comprehension capacities (particularly in Levels 1 and 2 to augment students' lower reading comprehension abilities), evidence in conversation, ability to evaluate what others are saying, and the capacity to share information effectively with others.

## Language

In the language domain, descriptors consistent with workforce preparation from the Employability Skills Framework and are vital to attaining college and career readiness from each level such as a growth in students' grammar and punctuation skills, as well as their growth in vocabulary.

### Level 1: Beginning Literacy

*Reading:* Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Literacy Level comprehend how print corresponds to spoken language and are able to demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sound-letter relationships (phonetic patterns), including consonant digraphs and blends. In particular, students at this level are able to recognize and produce rhyming words, blend and segment onsets and rhymes, isolate and pronounce initial, medial, and final sounds, add or substitute individual sounds, and blend and segment single syllable words. They are able to decode two-syllable words following basic patterns as well as recognize common high frequency words by sight. Individuals are able to read simple decodable texts with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases in texts with clear and explicit context.

Individuals ready to exit this level are able to determine main ideas, retell key details, and ask and answer questions about key details in simple texts. Individuals are also able to use the illustrations in the text(s), whether print or digital, to describe its key ideas (e.g., maps, charts,

photographs, cartoons). They also are able to use text features, both print and digital, to locate key facts or information. When listening to text above their current independent reading level, they are able to identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text, describe the connections between ideas within a text, and examine the basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic.

*Writing:* Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Literacy Level are able to write basic sight words and familiar words and phrases as they compose simple sentences or phrases. This includes writing simple informative texts in which they supply some facts about a topic and narratives that include some details regarding what happened. They use simple transition and temporal words to signal event order (e.g., so, and, because, when, next, finally). With support, they are able to gather and use information from provided sources, both print and digital, to answer a simple research question.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in conversations of short duration, collaborating with diverse partners and groups, while respecting individual differences. This includes following agreed upon rules for discussion and responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges. Individuals are able to describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, producing complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation. They can discuss what they have heard read aloud and ask and answer questions about it.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to correctly use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (past, present, and future), adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions. When writing sentences individuals correctly use capitalization, ending punctuation, and commas in dates and to separate single words in a series. They are able to spell words with common patterns and frequently occurring irregular words. Other words they spell phonetically. In response to prompts, they are able to produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences orally. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words, by applying their knowledge of frequently occurring roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. They are able to distinguish shades of meaning among verbs (e.g., look, glance, stare, glare) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by choosing them or acting out their meanings.

## **Level 2: Beginning Basic**

*Reading:* Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Basic Level are able to decode multi-syllable words, distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words, and recognize the spelling-sound correspondences for common vowel teams. They also are able to identify and understand the meaning of the most common prefixes and suffixes. They can read common irregular sight words. Individuals are able to read level appropriate texts (e.g., texts with a Lexile Measure of between 420 and 820) with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.<sup>14</sup> They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases in level-appropriate complex texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to determine main ideas, ask and

<sup>14</sup> Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level.

answer questions about key details in texts and show how those details support the main idea. Individuals also are able to explain how specific aspects of both digital and print illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words of a text. They are able to compare and contrast the most important points and key details of two texts on the same topic. When listening to text above their current independent reading level, they are able to describe the relationship between ideas in a text in terms of time, sequence, and cause/effect, as well as use text features and search tools, both print and digital, to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently. They also are able to describe how reasons support specific points an author makes in a text and identify the author's main purpose or what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe, as well as distinguish their own point of view from that of the author's.

*Writing:* Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Basic Level are able to write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons. They are able to write simple informative texts in which they examine a topic and convey information clearly. They also are able to write narratives with details that describe actions, thoughts, and feelings. They use transition and temporal words (e.g., also, another, more, but) to link ideas and signal event order. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to use technology to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others. They are able to conduct short research projects and summarize their learning in print. This includes taking brief notes from both print and digital sources, and sorting evidence into provided categories.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in a range of collaborative conversations with diverse partners and groups, respecting individual differences. This includes gaining the floor in respectful way, linking their comments to the remarks of others, and expressing their own ideas, clearly in light of the discussions. Individuals are able to report on a topic or text or recount an experience, with appropriate facts, and relevant, descriptive details. They are able to speak in complete sentences appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification. They can discuss what they have heard read aloud and provide the main ideas and appropriate elaboration and detail about the information presented.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to correctly use regular and irregular nouns and verbs, comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. When writing simple, compound, and complex sentences, individuals use correct subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement. They also use correct capitalization, ending punctuation, commas, and apostrophes to form contractions and possessives. They also are able to spell words with conventional patterns and suffixes. They are able to use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g., word patterns, ending rules) in writing words. In response to prompts, they are able to produce, expand, and rearrange simple and compound sentences. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words in level-appropriate complex texts, including academic words, by applying their knowledge of roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. They are able to distinguish literal from non-literal meaning of words, and shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, wondered, suspected). They are able to demonstrate understanding of and use general academic words that signal spatial and temporal relationships.

### Level 3: Low Intermediate

*Reading:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Intermediate Level are able to read fluently text of the complexity demanded of this level (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 740 and 1010).<sup>15</sup> They are able to use knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and roots and affixes to accurately decode unfamiliar words. They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases (e.g., metaphors and similes) in level-appropriate complex texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to make logical inferences, summarize central ideas or themes, and explain how they are supported by key details. They are able to explain events, procedures, or ideas in historical, scientific, or technical texts, including what happened and why. They are able to describe the overall structure of a text and compare and contrast the structures of two texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are also able to interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively to find an answer to a question or solve a problem. They display this facility with both print and digital media. Individuals are able to explain how authors use reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text and can integrate information from several texts, whether print, media, or a mix, on the same topic. They are able to describe how point of view influences how events are described. They are able to analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting similarities and differences. They are able to produce valid evidence for their findings and assertions.

*Writing:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Intermediate Level are able to write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with facts and logically ordered reasons. They are able to produce informative texts in which they develop a topic with concrete facts and details. They convey information clearly with precise language and well-organized paragraphs. They link ideas, opinions and reasons with words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., another, specifically, consequently, because). They are also able to use technology (including the Internet) to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others. They are able to conduct short research projects, making frequent use of on-line as well as print sources. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. They are able to summarize or paraphrase information from and provide a list of those sources.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in a range of collaborative conversations with diverse partners and groups, respecting individual differences. This includes demonstrating an understanding of teamwork and working well with others by carrying out their assigned roles, and posing and responding to specific questions, and making comments that contribute to and elaborate on the remarks of others. Individuals are able to report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and providing appropriate facts, and relevant, descriptive details that support the main ideas or themes. They are able to differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate. They also are able to paraphrase and summarize what they have heard aloud and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to use verb tenses to convey various times, sequences, States, and conditions correctly and recognize inappropriate shifts in verb tense. They use prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections

<sup>15</sup> Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level.

properly. Individuals write simple, compound, and complex sentences and use correct subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement throughout a piece of writing. They also use correct capitalization, commas, and underlining, quotation marks, and italics to indicate titles of works. They are able to correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two; there, their) and spell correctly, consulting references as needed. They are able to produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons as well as expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader interest and style. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words in level-appropriate complex texts, including academic words, by applying their knowledge of roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. Individuals are able to interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors. They also are able to recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs. They are able to demonstrate understanding of and use general academic words that signal precise actions or emotions (e.g., whined, stammered), signal contrast (e.g., however, nevertheless), or other logical relationships (e.g., however, similarly), and are basic to a particular topic (e.g., endangered when discussing animal preservation).

#### **Level 4: High Intermediate**

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit the High Intermediate Level are able to read fluently text of the complexity demanded of this level (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 925 and 1185).<sup>16</sup> They display increasing facility with academic vocabulary and are able to analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone in level-appropriate complex texts.

Individuals are able to make logical inferences by offering several pieces of textual evidence. This includes citing evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources in history, as well as analysis of science and technical texts. They are able to summarize and analyze central ideas, including how they are conveyed through particular details in the text. They also are able to analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between ideas or events and how major sections of a text contribute to the development of the ideas. They also are able to follow multistep procedures. Individuals are able to identify aspects of a text that reveal point of view and assess how point of view shapes style and content in texts. In addition, they are able to evaluate the validity of specific claims an author makes through the sufficiency of the reasoning and evidence supplied in the text. This includes analyzing how an author responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints. They are able to analyze how multiple texts address similar themes, including how authors acknowledge and respond to conflicting evidence or viewpoints and include or avoid particular facts. Individuals are also able to analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media as well as integrate and evaluate content from those sources, including quantitative or technical information presented visually and in words. They are able to produce valid evidence for their findings and assertions, make sound decisions, and solve problems.

*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to introduce claims, acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, support claims with clear

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reasons and relevant evidence, and organize them logically in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the topic. When writing informative texts, individuals are able to examine a topic through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant facts, concrete details, quotations, and other information to aid comprehension. Individuals create cohesion in their writing by clarifying the relationships among ideas, reasons, and evidence; using appropriate transitions; and including a logical progression of ideas, and maintaining consistency in style and tone. Individuals are able to use specific word choices appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. They also are able to use technology to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources. They conduct short research projects, drawing on several sources. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to locate and organize information, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and communicate the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit the High Intermediate level collaborate well as a member of team by building on others' ideas, expressing their own clearly and maintaining a positive attitude. This includes following the rules for collegial discussions and decision-making and tracking progress toward specific goals and deadlines. It also includes the ability to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence and ideas. During these discussions, individuals are able to qualify, alter, or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented by others. Just as in writing, individuals are able to delineate a speaker's argument, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance of the evidence. They are able to identify when irrelevant evidence is introduced. They also are able to present their own claims and findings that emphasize salient points in a focused and coherent manner, with relevant evidence, valid reasoning, and well-chosen details. Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit the High Intermediate level are able to ensure pronouns are in the proper case, recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person, and correct vague or unclear pronouns. They know how to form all verb tenses, and recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood. They know how to recognize and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. They are able to choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating redundancy and wordiness as well as maintaining consistency in style and tone. Though errors may be present, the meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level-appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

## **Level 5: Low Adult Secondary**

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit Low Adult Secondary Level are able to read fluently texts that measure at the secondary level of complexity (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 1050 and 1335).<sup>17</sup> This includes increasing facility with academic vocabulary and

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figurative language in level-appropriate complex texts. This includes determining the meaning of symbols and key terms used in a specific scientific or technical context. They are able to analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Individuals are able to make logical and well-supported inferences about those complex texts. They are able to analyze the development of central ideas over the course of a text and explain how they are refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or portions of text. They are able to provide an objective summary of a text. They are able to analyze in detail a series of events described in text and determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them. They also are able to follow complex multistep directions or procedures.

Individuals are able to compare the point of view of two or more authors writing about the same or similar topics. They are able to evaluate the validity of specific claims an author makes through the sufficiency and relevance of the reasoning and evidence supplied. They also are able to identify false statements and fallacious reasoning. They are able to analyze how multiple texts address related themes and concepts, including challenging texts, such as seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address). In addition, they are able to contrast the findings presented in a text, noting whether those findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts. Individuals are also able to translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically into words. Through their reading and research, they are able to cite strong and thorough textual evidence for their findings and assertions to make informed decisions and solve problems.

*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to introduce precise claims, distinguish the claims from alternate or opposing claims, and support claims with clear reasons and relevant and sufficient evidence. When writing informative texts, they are able to examine a topic through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of well chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic. They use appropriate and varied transitions as well as consistency in style and tone to link major sections of the text, create cohesion, and establish clear relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence.

Individuals use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. They are also able to take advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and display information flexibly and dynamically. They conduct short research projects as well as more sustained research projects to make informed decisions and solve problems. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to gather and organize information, assess the credibility, accuracy, and usefulness of each source, and communicate the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Adult Secondary level are able to participate in a thoughtful, respectful, and well-reasoned exchange of ideas as a member of a team. As they collaborate with peers, they are able to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, clear goals and deadlines. They are able to propel these conversations forward



by clarifying, verifying, or challenging ideas that are presented, actively incorporating others into the discussion, responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, and summarizing points of agreement and disagreement. They also are able to qualify, alter, or justify their own views and understanding in light of the evidence and reasoning presented by others. Just as in writing, individuals are able to evaluate a speaker's point of view, and in particular, assess the links among ideas, word choice, and points of emphasis and tone used. They also are able to present their own findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning. Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Adult Secondary level demonstrate strong control of English grammar, usage, and mechanics and use these elements to enhance the presentation of ideas both in speech and writing. This includes the use of parallel structure and the correct use of various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. Though some errors may be present, the meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level-appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

## **Level 6: High Adult Secondary**

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit High Adult Secondary Level are able to read fluently at the college and career readiness level of text complexity (e.g., a Lexile Measure between 1185 and 1385).<sup>18</sup> This includes increasing facility with academic vocabulary and figurative language sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level. They are able to analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Individuals are able to make logical and well-supported inferences about those complex texts. They are able to summarize the challenging ideas, concepts or processes contained within them. They are able to paraphrase texts in simpler but still accurate terms. Whether they are conducting analyses of complex primary and secondary sources in history or in scientific and technical texts, they are able to analyze how the ideas and concepts within them develop and interact. Individuals are able to assess how points of view shape style and content in texts with particular attention to distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Individuals are able to analyze how multiple texts address related themes and concepts, including challenging texts such as U.S. founding documents (Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights). In addition, they are able to compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. Individuals are also able to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media in order to address a question. Through their reading and research at complex levels, they are able to cite strong and thorough textual evidence for their findings and assertions to make sound decisions and solve problems.

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*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaim(s), reasons, and evidence. They fully develop claims and counterclaims, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns. When writing informative texts, they are able to organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions through the effective selection and analysis of content. They use appropriate and varied transitions to clarify the relationships among complex ideas, create cohesion, and link major sections of the text. Individuals are able to maintain a formal style while they attend to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. They are also able to take advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and display information flexibly and dynamically. They conduct short research projects as well as more sustained research projects that require the synthesis of multiple complex sources to make informed decisions and solve problems. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to gather and organize information, assess the credibility, accuracy, and usefulness of each source in answering the research question, noting any discrepancies among the data collected.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit the High Adult Secondary level demonstrate flexibility, integrity, and initiative when collaborating as an effective member of a team. They are able to manage their time and other resources wisely in order to contribute to the team's overarching goal(s) and meet the agreed upon deadlines. This includes the ability to exercise leadership, resolve conflicts as they arise, and pose and respond to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas. They are able to express alternative views clearly and persuasively, verify or challenge others' ideas and conclusions, and think creatively and critically in light of the evidence and reasoning presented. Just as in writing, individuals are able to evaluate a speaker's point of view, stance, premises, evidence, reasoning, rhetoric, and tone. They also are able to present their own findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, making strategic use of digital media. Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* Individuals ready to exit the High Adult Secondary level demonstrate strong control of English grammar, usage, and mechanics and use these elements to enhance the presentation of ideas both in speech and writing. This includes the use of parallel structure and the correct use of various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. The meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level-appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

## Exhibit B.1

### Quantitative Analysis Chart for Determining Text Complexity<sup>19</sup>

CCR Levels of Learning	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework	Reading Maturity
B (Level 2)	2.75–5.14	42–54	1.98–5.34	420–820	3.53–6.13
C (Level 3)	4.97–7.03	52–60	4.51–7.73	740–1010	5.42–7.92
D (Level 4)	7.00–9.98	57–67	6.51–10.34	925–1185	7.04–9.57
E (Level 5)	9.67–12.01	62–72	8.32–12.12	1050–1335	8.41–10.81
E (Level 6)	11.20–14.10	67–74	10.34–14.2	1185–1385	9.57–12.00

## MATHEMATICS

### Introduction and Process

The EFL Descriptors for Mathematics also use the CCR as the foundation. They are intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. While these narrative descriptors address the most critical concepts for adult learners (as defined in the Major Work of the Level), there are additional concepts found in the CCR standards that support the major work for each level, and that are included in these descriptors. Lesson plans and assessment items for adult learners should be based on the full text of the CCR standards for each level, using these critical concepts as the foundation for lesson development and assessment.

The mathematics descriptors are divided into six educational functioning levels. The levels are Beginning Literacy (corresponding to Level A of the CCR); Beginning Basic (corresponding to Level B of the CCR); Low Intermediate (corresponding to Level C of the CCR); Middle Intermediate (corresponding to part of the Level D CCR), High Intermediate (corresponding to the remainder of the Level D CCR); and Adult Secondary (corresponding to Level E of the CCR). Each of the levels corresponds roughly to two grade levels, in K-12 terms, except for Level E, which combines the critical concepts of all of grades 9 through 12. Within each level the descriptors are further divided by domain: *The Mathematical Practices*, *Number Sense and Operations*, *Algebraic Thinking*, *Geometry (and Measurement)*, and *Data Analysis (Statistics and Probability)*.

The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at any given level but provide examples of the most critical concepts and skills for the level to guide assessment and instruction. Assessment of the Mathematical Practice descriptors are best performed in the classroom using assessments that could be formative or summative and may be informal. It should be noted that mathematics placement decisions should take into account the reading level of the adult student. Verbally presented application problems at all mathematics levels require a minimum reading level.

<sup>19</sup> This chart only identifies text complexity for levels B through E. At level A, students are just learning how to read, so it is not appropriate to focus on the complexity of the text until level B.

## Level 1: Beginning Literacy

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher a simple problem presented in a context and reason about and apply correct units to the results. They can visualize a situation using manipulatives or drawings and explain their processes and results using mathematical terms and symbols appropriate for the level. They recognize errors in the work and reasoning of others. They are able to strategically select and use appropriate tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, and/or manipulatives. They can see patterns and structure in sets of numbers and geometric shapes and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level have an understanding of whole number place value for tens and ones and are able to use their understanding of place value to compare two-digit numbers. They are able to add whole numbers within 100 and explain their reasoning, e.g., using concrete models or drawings and strategies based on place value and/or properties of operations. They are able to apply their knowledge of whole number addition and subtraction to represent and solve word problems that call for addition of three whole numbers whose sum is less than 20 by using such problem-solving tools as objects, drawings, and/or simple equations.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand and apply the properties of operations to addition and subtraction problems. They understand the relationship between the two operations and can determine the unknown number in addition or subtraction equations.

*Geometry and Measurement:* Students prepared to exit this level can analyze and compare two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes based on their attributes, such as their shape, size, orientation, the number of sides and/or vertices (angles), or the lengths of their sides. They can reason with two-dimensional shapes (e.g., quadrilaterals and half- and quarter-circles) and with three-dimensional shapes (e.g., right prisms, cones, cylinders) to create composite shapes. They are able to measure the length of an object as a whole number of units, which are not necessarily standard units, for example measuring the length of a pencil using a paper clip as the length unit.

*Data Analysis:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to organize, represent, and interpret simple data sets (e.g., lists of numbers, shapes, or items) using up to three categories. They can answer basic questions related to the total number of data points in a set and the number of data points in each category, and can compare the number of data points in the different categories.

## Level 2: Beginning Basic

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher two-step problems presented in a context, visualizing a situation using diagrams or sketches, and reasoning about and applying the correct units and the proper degree of precision to the results. They can explain their processes and results using mathematical terms and symbols appropriate for the level and recognize errors in the reasoning of others. They strategically select and use the

appropriate tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, manipulatives, and/or calculators. They are able to see patterns and structure in sets of numbers, including in multiplication or addition tables, and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level understand place value for whole numbers to 1000 and can use that understanding to read, write, count, compare, and round three-digit whole numbers to the nearest 10 or 100. They are able to compute fluently with all four operations with whole numbers within 100. They use place value and properties of operations to explain why addition and subtraction strategies work, and can demonstrate an understanding of the inverse relationship between multiplication and division. They can solve one- and two-step word problems involving all four operations within 100 and identify and explain arithmetic patterns. They have an understanding of fractions, especially unit fractions, and can represent simple fractions on a number line. They understand and can explain the equivalence of fractions, can recognize and generate simple equivalent fractions, and can compare two fractions with the same numerator or denominator by reasoning about their size.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level apply the properties of operations to multiplication and division of whole numbers. They understand the relationship between multiplication and division and can determine the unknown number in multiplication or division equations.

*Geometry and Measurement:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to reason about geometric shapes and their attributes. They can demonstrate an understanding that different shapes might share common attributes (e.g., four sides) and can compare and classify two-dimensional shapes, particularly quadrilaterals. They are able to partition shapes into parts with equal areas and express the area of each part as a unit fraction of the whole. They can use common U.S. Customary and metric units for linear measurements (e.g., inches, feet, centimeters, and meters) and solve problems involving measurement and estimation of intervals of time, liquid volumes, and masses of objects. They understand the concept of area and can relate it to addition and multiplication to solve real-world problems. They also understand, and can solve, real-world and mathematical problems involving perimeter of polygons.

*Data Analysis:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to draw and interpret simple graphs (e.g., bar graphs, picture graphs, and number line diagrams) including scaled bar and picture graphs. They can solve one- and two-step problems using scaled bar graphs. They can generate measurement data by measuring lengths to the nearest half- and quarter-inch and display that data by making a line plot marked off in appropriate units.

### **Level 3: Low Intermediate**

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher multi-step problems presented in a context and reason about and apply the correct units and the proper degree of precision to the results. They can visualize a situation using diagrams or sketches, see multiple strategies for solving a problem, explain their processes and results, and recognize errors in the work and reasoning of others. They can express themselves using mathematical terms and notation appropriate for the level and can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, and/or technology. They are



# EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)<sup>13</sup>

## LITERACY/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### Introduction

The educational functioning level (EFL) descriptors for Literacy/English Language Arts are intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. They are divided into six EFLs: Beginning Literacy; Beginning Basic; Low Intermediate; High Intermediate; Low Adult Secondary; and High Adult Secondary. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at any given level but provide examples of the most critical concepts and skills for the level. The descriptors use the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education (CCR) as the foundation.

While these narrative descriptors address the most critical concepts for assessment and instruction for adult learners, lesson plans and test items should be based on additional critical concepts from State instructional frameworks and standards, as appropriate for the learner and State requirements.

The EFLs for Literacy/English Language arts are organized into reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language domains. Emphasis was placed on reading and writing because most instruction and assessment attention will be paid to these domains for ABE students. In addition, the descriptors were further informed by OCTAE's Framework for Employability Skills to ensure the levels paid adequate attention to workforce preparation.

### Reading

The reading sections of the descriptors are consistently more comprehensive than the other domains. Reading is a critical area for college and career readiness. One of the elements in the reading descriptors that draws clear distinctions between competencies required at each level is the complexity of the text that students are to be reading. The EFLs specify a staircase of increasing text complexity for students to master from beginning basic reading through the college and career readiness level. The comprehension skills of reading are to be applied to level-appropriate complex text. The reading domain elements of the descriptors carry within it references to other key skills from the other domains and workforce preparation skills. Examples of this include listening comprehension as a supplement to reading comprehension at levels 1 and 2 so students can work with the richer ideas adult students can handle intellectually, if not yet independently through their own reading. It also includes integrating and evaluating information from a variety of media, including translating quantitative or technical information presented visually or in words. Learning to work with diverse media is an important job skill as well as a critical applied academic skill. Another example is an emphasis on research that

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<sup>13</sup> These descriptors are included in the AEFLA information collection (OMB control number 1830-0027) and were implemented with Federal Register notice 82 FR 42339, September 7, 2017.

able to see patterns and structure in sets of numbers and geometric shapes and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level understand place value for both multi-digit whole numbers and decimals to thousandths, and use their understanding to read, write, compare, and round decimals. They are able to use their place value understanding and properties of operations to fluently perform operations with multi-digit whole numbers and decimals. They can find common factors, common multiples, and understand fraction concepts, including fraction equivalence and comparison. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide with fractions and mixed numbers. They are able to solve multi-step word problems posed with whole numbers and fractions, using the four operations. They also have an understanding of ratio concepts and can use ratio language to describe a relationship between two quantities, including the concept of a unit rate associated with a ratio.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to apply and extend their understanding of arithmetic to algebraic expressions, using a symbol to represent an unknown value. They can write, evaluate, and interpret expressions and equations, including expressions that arise from formulas used in real-world problems. They can solve real-world and mathematical problems by writing and solving simple one-variable equations and write a simple inequality that represents a constraint or condition in a real-world or mathematical problem. They can represent and analyze quantitative relationships between dependent and independent variables.

*Geometry and Measurement:* Students prepared to exit this level have a basic understanding of the coordinate plane and can plot points (i.e., ordered pairs) and place polygons in the coordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems. They can classify two-dimensional shapes and use formulas to determine the area of two-dimensional shapes such as triangles and quadrilaterals.

They can determine the surface area of three-dimensional shapes composed of rectangles and triangles, and find the volume of right rectangular prisms. They are able to convert like measurement units within a given measurement system (e.g., convert 5 cm to 0.05 m) and use these conversions to solve multi-step, real-world problems. They are also able to solve measurement word problems (such as those that involve area, perimeter, distance, time intervals, liquid volumes, mass, and money) that involve simple fractions or decimals.

*Data Analysis and Statistics:* Students prepared to exit this level have a basic conceptual understanding of statistical variability, including such concepts as center, spread, and the overall shape of a distribution of data. They can present data using displays such as dot plots, histograms, and box plots.

## **Level 4: Middle Intermediate**

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, determine an efficient strategy (from among multiple possible strategies) for solving a multi-step problem, and persevere in solving challenging problems. They can express themselves using the mathematical terms and notation appropriate to the level. They are able to defend their

findings and critique the reasoning of others. They are accurate in their calculations and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, calculators, and/or spreadsheets. They are able to see patterns and structure in number sets, data, expressions and equations, and geometric figures.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level have an understanding of the rational number system, including how rational numbers can be represented on a number line and pairs of rational numbers can be represented on a coordinate plane. They can apply the concept of absolute value to find horizontal and vertical distances. They are able to apply the properties of integer exponents and evaluate, estimate, and compare simple square roots and cube roots. Individuals at this level also understand ratio, rate, and percent concepts, as well as proportional relationships.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand the connections between proportional relationships, lines, and linear equations. They understand numerical and algebraic expressions, and equations and are able to use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems. They are able to analyze and solve linear equations and pairs of simultaneous linear equations. Individuals at this level are able to define, interpret, and compare linear functions.

*Geometry:* Students prepared to exit this level can solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve angle measure, circumference, and area of 2-dimensional figures. They are able to solve problems involving scale drawings of 2-dimensional geometric figures. They understand the concepts of congruence and similarity with respect to 2-dimensional figures. They understand the Pythagorean theorem and can apply it to determine missing lengths in right triangles.

*Statistics and Probability:* Students prepared to exit this level can summarize and describe numerical data sets in relation to their context, including determining measures of center and variability and describing patterns and/or striking deviations from patterns. They understand and can apply the concept of chance, or probability. They are able to use scatter plots for bivariate measurement data to describe patterns of association between two quantities (such as clustering, outliers, positive or negative association, linear or non-linear association).

## **Level 5: High Intermediate**

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, determine an efficient strategy (from among multiple possible strategies) for solving a multi-step problem, and persevere in solving challenging problems. They can reason quantitatively, including using units as a way to solve problems. They are able to defend their findings and critique the reasoning of others. They are accurate in their calculations and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as graphing calculators, spreadsheets, and/or computer software. They are able to make generalizations based on patterns and structure they

discover in number sets, data, expressions and equations, and geometric figures and use these insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level can reason about and solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve the four operations with rational numbers. They can apply the concept of absolute value to demonstrate on a number line their understanding of addition and subtraction with negative and positive rational numbers. Individuals at this level can apply ratio and percent concepts, including using rates and proportional relationships to solve multi-step real-world and mathematical problems.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to use algebraic and graphical representations to solve real-world and mathematical problems, involving linear equations, inequalities, and pairs of simultaneous linear equations. Individuals at this level are able to use linear functions to describe, analyze, and model linear relationships between quantities.

*Geometry:* Students prepared to exit this level can solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve volume and surface area of 3-dimensional geometric figures. They can use informal arguments to establish facts about various angle relationships such as the relationships between angles created when parallel lines are cut by a transversal. They apply the Pythagorean theorem to determine lengths in real-world contexts and distances in the coordinate plane.

*Statistics and Probability:* Students prepared to exit this level can use random sampling to draw inferences about a population and are able to draw informal comparative inferences about two populations using measures of center and measures of variability for numerical data from random samples. They can develop, use, and evaluate probability models. They are able to use scatter plots for bivariate measurement data to interpret patterns of association between two quantities (such as clustering, outliers, positive or negative association, linear or non-linear association) and a 2-way table to summarize and interpret bivariate categorical data.

## **Level 6: Adult Secondary**

*The Mathematical Practices:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, make assumptions based on a situation, select an efficient strategy from multiple possible problem-solving strategies, plan a solution pathway, and make adjustments as needed when solving problems. They persevere in solving challenging problems, including considering analogous, simpler problems as a way to solving a more complex one. They can reason quantitatively, including through the use of units, and can express themselves using the precise definitions and mathematical terms and notation appropriate to the level. They are accurate in their calculations, use an appropriate level of precision in finding solutions and reporting results, and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They are able to make conjectures, use logic to defend their conclusions, and can detect faulty thinking and errors caused by improper use of technology. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions, interpret data, make predictions, and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools, such as measuring devices, calculators, spreadsheets, and/or computer software, to aid in their work. They are able to see patterns and structure in

calculations, expressions, and equations and make connections to algebraic generalizations, which they use to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level have extended their number sense to include irrational numbers, radicals, and rational exponents and understand and use the set of real numbers. They are able to assess the reasonableness of calculation results based on the limitations of technology or given units and quantities and give results with the appropriate degree of precision.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand the structure of expressions and can use that structure to rewrite linear, exponential, and quadratic expressions. They can add, subtract, and multiply polynomials that involve linear and/or quadratic expressions. They are also able to create linear equations and inequalities and quadratic and simple exponential equations to represent relationships between quantities and can represent constraints by linear equations or inequalities, or by systems of linear equations and/or inequalities. They can interpret the structure of polynomial and rational expressions and use that structure to identify ways to rewrite and operate accurately with them. They can add, subtract, and multiply polynomials that extend beyond quadratics. They are able to rearrange formulas to highlight a quantity of interest, for example rearranging Ohm's law,  $V = IR$ , to highlight resistance  $R$ . They are also able to create equations and inequalities representing relationships between quantities, including those that extend beyond equations or inequalities arising from linear, quadratic, and simple exponential functions to include those arising from simple rational functions. They are able to use these equations/inequalities to solve problems both algebraically and graphically. They can solve linear equations and inequalities; systems of linear equations; quadratic, simple rational, and radical equations in one variable; and recognize how and when extraneous solutions may arise.

Students prepared to exit this level also have a basic understanding of functions, can use function notation properly, and use such notation to write a function describing a relationship between two quantities. They are able to evaluate functions for inputs in their domains and interpret linear, quadratic, and exponential functions that arise in applications in terms of the context. They are able to construct, graph, compare, and interpret functions (including, but not limited to, linear, quadratic, and exponential). They can sketch graphs given a verbal description of the relationship and identify and interpret key features of the graphs of functions that arise in applications in a context.

They are able to select or define a function that appropriately models a relationship and to compare properties of two functions each represented in a different way (algebraically, graphically, numerically in tables, or by verbal description).

*Geometry:* Students prepared to exit this level can solve problems involving similarity and congruence criteria for triangles and use volume formulas for cylinders, pyramids, cones, and spheres to solve problems. They can apply the concepts of density based on area and volume in modeling situations (e.g., persons per square mile, BTU's per cubic foot).

*Data Analysis and Statistics:* Students prepared to exit this level can summarize, represent, and interpret data based on two categorical and quantitative variables, including by

using frequency tables. They can compare data sets by looking at commonalities and differences in shape, center, and spread. They can recognize possible associations and trends in data, in particular in linear models, and distinguish between correlation and causation. They interpret one- and two-variable data, including those with linear and non-linear relationships. They interpret the slope (rate of change) and intercept (constant term) for a line of best fit and in the context of the data. They understand and account for extreme points of data in their analysis and interpret relative frequencies (joint, marginal, and conditional).