



Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research

Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Alan M. Lesgold, Melissa Welch-Ross, National Research Council

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A high level of literacy in both print and digital media is required for negotiating most aspects of 21st-century life, including supporting a family, education, health, civic participation, and competitiveness in the global economy. Yet, more than 90 million U.S. adults lack adequate literacy. Furthermore, only 38 percent of U.S. 12th graders are at or above proficient in reading.

Improving Adult Literacy Instruction synthesizes the research on literacy and learning to improve literacy instruction in the United States and to recommend a more systemic approach to research, practice, and policy. The book focuses on individuals ages 16 and older who are not in K-12 education. It identifies factors that affect literacy development in adolescence and adulthood in general, and examines their implications for strengthening literacy instruction for this population. It also discusses technologies for learning that can assist with multiple aspects of teaching, assessment, and accommodations for learning.

There is inadequate knowledge about effective instructional practices and a need for better assessment and ongoing monitoring of adult students' proficiencies, weaknesses, instructional environments, and progress, which might guide instructional planning. Improving Adult Literacy Instruction recommends a program of research and innovation to validate, identify the boundaries of, and extend current knowledge to improve instruction for adults and adolescents outside school. The book is a valuable resource for curriculum developers, federal agencies such as the Department of Education, administrators, educators, and funding agencies.

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