

# Tutor Tip

By Todd Evans  
Applied Technology Coordinator

## How to Tailor Instruction Using Reading Profiles

*Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles to help practitioners bridge the gap between research and practice. The Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) was designed to give teachers more diagnostic information about readers' strengths and weaknesses. Readers who have ideas for future research-based articles in LitScape should contact dharting@proliteracy.org.*

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has created a free online resource where student assessment staff or tutors enter scores for a student that then can be matched to one of 11 student profiles. The profiles, based on the ARCS at the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), outline student characteristics and provide a guide for instructing students at many skill levels.

Student scores are entered on the NIFL Web site for five different components of reading: word recognition, spelling, word meaning, silent reading comprehension, and oral reading rate. Any test that provides a grade level equivalent can be used for any of the components. The Web site offers suggestions for tests in each category. Once the scores are entered, the student is matched to a profile and additional information is provided.

Example: Barbara is working with a student who scored a 3.8 on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). To get the other four scores, she:

- Administers the word-meaning test that she downloaded from the reading profiles Web site, and the student scores a 6.0
- Uses a Slosson Oral Reading Test score of 3.0 for the word recognition score
- Uses the TABE spelling assessment score of 3.0
- Calculates the student's oral reading rate at 110 words per minute

Barbara enters these scores, and the student is matched with Profile 8: High Word Meaning.

In explaining this profile, the text first addresses the topic of "Word Recognition and Spelling." It asks Barbara to think about the following questions:

"Have your learners mastered these prerequisite skills to accurate decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling)?"

1. Do they know the names and sounds of the consonants with automaticity?
2. Do they know the names and the long and short sounds of the vowels with automaticity?
3. Do they know the principles of open and closed syllables?
4. Do they understand segmentation/chunking practices?"

The profile then gives a general description of the reader's skills in the area of word recognition and spelling:

The National Institute for Literacy Web site makes it easy to adapt reading lessons to a student's strengths.

"Profile 8 readers have not mastered the above skills to the point of being able to apply them automatically when they begin to read or spell a word. Developing automaticity in attaching sounds to symbols (phonological awareness) is the skill to aim for. However, Profile 8 learners have a dyslexic's reading component profile of low print skills (alphabets) and higher vocabulary skills, and therefore, for some, phonological awareness may never become fully automatic. But, practice will strengthen these reading skills and benefit all others."

The Web site suggests activities to improve word recognition, phonemic awareness, visual memory, and silent reading comprehension. They are included both in the profiles and in a free mini-course on reading.

Here are sample activities from the course to help people improve their phonemic awareness:

- **Phoneme isolation**, which requires recognizing individual sounds in words; for example, "Tell me the first sound in paste." (\p\)
- **Phoneme identity**, which requires recognizing the common sound in different words; for example, "Tell me the sound that is the same in bike, boy, and bell." (\b\)

- **Phoneme categorization**, which requires recognizing the word with the odd sound in a sequence of three or four words; for example, "Which word does not belong? bus, bun, rug." (rug)
- **Phoneme blending**, which requires listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognizable word; for example, "What word is \s\ \k\ \u\ \l\?" (school)
- **Phoneme segmentation**, which requires breaking a word into its sounds by tapping out or counting the sounds or by pronouncing and positioning a marker for each sound; for example, "How many phonemes are there in ship?" (three: \S\ \l\ \p\)
- **Phoneme deletion**, which requires recognizing what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed; for example, "What is smile without the s?" (mile).

For more information about the profiles, or to take the mini-course, go to [www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles](http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles).