“Every adventure requires a first step”

Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll, 1865
Strategic Conversations:  
Adult Literacy Assessment and Measuring Progress  

Participant Workbook  

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Developed for Alberta’s

COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING PROGRAM

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Networking Notes

Who’s Done That?
Welcome!

Use this workbook to record your ideas, questions, and notes from the workshop, and to refresh your memory about assessment tools when you return to your program.

Description of this workshop

The workshop will focus on these questions:

- What is the purpose of assessment?
- What are the Alberta Reading Benchmarks and what resources do they offer?
- How do I administer, score and follow up with the results of the readforward assessment tool?

What questions are you bringing to the workshop?

Note them here.

What ground rules do you think are important for the day?

- What will make it possible for everyone in the group to work and learn?
- Write two or three rules that you think are important.
Activity 1: KWL (Know - Want to know - Learn) and Paired Listening

Purpose

KWL is a technique that can help learners focus their attention on a topic. It can be an effective guide to reading unfamiliar text, or a way to organize thoughts on a topic. People often record their ideas on a chart.

We can use the KWL technique to brainstorm what we know about literacy learner assessment, the Alberta Reading Benchmarks and readforward, what we want to know (or what we wonder) about those topics and, at the end of this workshop, what we have learned.

Your task

1. Use the paired listening technique explained by the facilitator.
2. Work with one other person. Each person takes a turn answering the following two questions.

What do you **KNOW** about literacy learner assessment?

What do you **WANT** to know about Alberta Reading Benchmarks and readforward?

3. When both persons have had a turn as speaker and listener, post ideas on sticky notes and place them on the flip chart papers.
Activity 2: What is assessment and why do we use it?

Your task

Reflect on the following two questions, and write your thoughts in the spaces below.
When you are ready, share your answers with the people at your table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is assessment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do we use it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Activity 3: Clearing up possible confusion: benchmarks, assessment and ESL

Assessment tools:
Assess a learner’s skills or knowledge related to a particular process, such as reading, writing, listening or speaking.

Benchmarks:
Provide a frame of reference about what skills are needed for what the learner wants to learn, such as reading, writing, listening or speaking.

This space is provided for your notes on this activity.
**Activity 4: An introduction to the Alberta Reading Benchmarks (ARB)**

**Your task**

1. Watch the “Introduction to the ARB” video.
2. Note which questions have been assigned to your group or table.
3. Write the answers to your assigned questions below. You will have an opportunity to fill in all the answers following the video.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> What are the Alberta Reading Benchmarks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Why were the ARB developed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> What is the purpose of the ARB for learners?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> What is the purpose of the ARB for practitioners?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What is the purpose of the ARB for government?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How many levels are in the ARB?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Each level has four categories. What are they?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Where on the website can you find suggestions that will support learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>According to the video, what is the “key” to working with the ARB?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 5: Using the ARB

Alberta Reading Benchmarks Step-by-Step

Learner would like to improve their reading

Start with a conversation, asking questions such as:
What do you read now? What would you like to read?

Have several levels and types of reading texts on hand

Find resources for different levels at www.arbforadults.ca under "Resources"
Ask learner to choose a reading sample that they are comfortable with

Determine at which level the learner is reading

Refer to ARB Levels Chart in User Guide, page 8 & 9 (found on ARB website)

Go to section of web site related to the determined level

Watch the video about that reading level, which will tell you what you need to know
Go to the ARB User Guide to find a list of skills learners have at this level

Also on the ARB website

Find content to be taught at this level
And habits to encourage at this level
Download a list of resources and teaching strategies

Prepare a Learning Plan

Use "At a Glance Teaching Strategies" from the ARB website to help prepare plan
Refer to "Creating a Learning Plan using the ARB" from www.arbforadults.ca
Your task

1. Read David’s profile and the instructor’s observations, below.

2. Review the ARB Levels Chart.

3. Working alone, with a partner or in a small group, use the profile and the levels chart to answer this question, and share your conclusions: Using the ARB Levels Chart as a guide, at what ARB level would you assess David’s skill based on the observations of David’s reading performance?

Sample Diagnostic Reading Assessment

Read David’s learner profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| David went to school until he was 12 years old but had to stop when his dad died. There were 4 kids in the family and David was the oldest so he went to work with his mother to support the family. When he was 17 he moved to the Northwest Territories and got a job working in a mine where he stayed until he retired.  

Gardening is his favourite past-time but he would also like to have a part-time job to keep him busy because his wife intends to continue working for another few years. His first part-time job, as a car wash attendant, was frustrating for him because he had difficulty reading the instructions for the maintenance and repair of the pay stations which needed regular attention.  

For someone who led a successful and profitable career as a miner it was demoralizing to have so much difficulty with a job he felt should have been easy. |
The chart below demonstrates how to use instructor observations of reading skills and align them to the ARB descriptors. (Refer the ARB At-A-Glance p. 8-9).

Referencing David's Skills to the ARB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor's Observations of Reading Skills</th>
<th>ARB Reading Task (ARB level)</th>
<th>Performing Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good decoding skills but struggles with words with unpredictable spelling</td>
<td><em>Can sound out words that follow the most common sound/spelling relationships</em></td>
<td>1C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to pull out basic facts from the readings such as things, people, places, times and amounts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has trouble following an idea if it is explained over more than 1 sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed reading a short article about container gardening. Is able to decipher most words including some difficult words like <em>zucchini</em> and <em>fertilize</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a more difficult time with a short biography on a Canadian Olympic medalist and needed help with words like <em>skiing</em> and <em>physical</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# The Alberta Reading Benchmarks Levels Chart

This handy chart gives practitioners a quick overview of Alberta Reading Benchmarks level 1 A, B, C and skill sets.

## ARB LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>1A</th>
<th>1B</th>
<th>1C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readers at this level</strong>&lt;br&gt;can manage texts that:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use simple, familiar, everyday words</td>
<td>use short — usually a few words long but can be up to one short, simple sentence in length</td>
<td>are clearly expressed using basic words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use single words</td>
<td>make use of common formats (phone numbers, addresses, dates, prices)</td>
<td>use simple sentences on familiar topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>may use short simple lists with up to a few items</td>
<td>are simple, and distraction-free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>are up to several sentences in length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>include simple forms that require personal information to be written on them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>use simple lists with several items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## READER'S VOCABULARY AND DECODING SKILLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READER'S VOCABULARY AND DECODING SKILLS</th>
<th>1A</th>
<th>1B</th>
<th>1C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readers at this level</strong>&lt;br&gt;can identify:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very few sight words</td>
<td>concrete nouns and simple action verbs</td>
<td>familiar, common, everyday words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one- and two-syllable words</td>
<td>some familiar three-syllable words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have little decoding ability</td>
<td>can decode words that are simple and easy to sound out and that follow the most common sound/spelling relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do not yet have the skills to sound out words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have moderate decoding skills; can sound out words that follow the most common sound/spelling relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## READING TASKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING TASKS</th>
<th>1A</th>
<th>1B</th>
<th>1C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readers at this level:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be able to:</td>
<td>focus on words rather than on phrases or sentences</td>
<td>find information that uses simple and common words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>identify the alphabet’s letter names</td>
<td>rely on understanding meaning rather than relying on text structure to find information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>identify sounds made by some of the letters</td>
<td>select from choices given several possibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>identify a few sight words</td>
<td>know where to write personal information on a form (name, phone number, address)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>use simple comparisons with three or more items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interpret a short text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## The Alberta Reading Benchmarks Levels Chart

This handy chart gives practitioners a quick overview of Alberta Reading Benchmarks level 2A, 2B, C and skill sets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARB LEVEL</th>
<th>TEXT CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>2A</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>2C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readers at this level can manage texts that:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use variability in sentence structure, including</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ short and long sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ simple and complex sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ are up to several short paragraphs in length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ contains longer and more complex vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use complex organization with multiple text formats in one text, such as continuous text with lists, charts, graphs, or diagrams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use abstract vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ are up to 500 words in length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ are not necessarily straightforward; meaning is subtle or implicit in text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ include content that may be distracting, uses synonyms, or has more information than is necessary for the task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• contain difficult and less common vocabulary on a wide range of topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ are 500 - 700 words in length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ provides multiple pieces of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>READERS’ VOCABULARY AND DECODING SKILLS</th>
<th>2A</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>2C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readers at this level can identify:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• some longer and more complex words in a familiar context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• some abstract words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• many abstract words; reading vocabulary is strong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• more complex words that relate to a broader general knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readers at this level:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have decoding skills that are strong enough to sound out most words the reader knows orally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have strong decoding skills and can sound out most words quickly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have strong decoding skills and can sound out most words automatically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>READING TASKS</th>
<th>2A</th>
<th>2B</th>
<th>2C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readers at this level:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• relate information to other information further away in the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• find complex information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cycle to find more than one piece of information that is not side by side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• select among choices in a short text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• make more complex comparisons between items mentioned in the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use guiding features in the text to find information; e.g., scan for key words using headings, inset boxes, or bold print to find information without reading every word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cycle to locate up to three or four pieces of information; the number of requested items is specified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• complete complex searches including combining information from different parts of the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• manage distracting information such as the use of synonyms and the presence of extra information not related to the task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use information in the text to find further information in the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• figure out meaning when it is implicitly or indirectly expressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• can be stated in the negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• read longer and more complex text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• cycle through text and locate all relevant information; the number of items is not specified in the search task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reorganize or summarize many pieces of complex information from one part of text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• manage conditional information in longer, more complex text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• navigates through lengthy and complex text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# The Alberta Reading Benchmarks Levels Chart

This handy chart gives practitioners a quick overview of Alberta Reading Benchmarks level 3A and skill sets.

**ARB LEVEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>3A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Readers at this level can manage texts that: | - are of considerable complexity and length on a wide variety of topics: grade 12 high-school texts in university-track courses  
- are 600 - 900 words in length  
- include lots of information that may not be needed for the task  
- may present conflicting or contradictory information |

**READERS’ VOCABULARY AND DECODING SKILLS 3A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readers at this level can identify:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - vocabulary that reflects some in-depth knowledge in specific areas of study or work; reading vocabulary is strong  
- have fully developed decoding skills and are able to silently sound out words very automatically and quickly |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readers at this level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**READING TASKS 3A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readers at this level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - cycle through and locate many pieces of complex information scattered throughout the text  
- find complex information in order to summarize, reorganize, or integrate with background knowledge  
- identify, compare, and contrast multiple pieces of information  
- generate ideas and opinions by connecting information from the text with background knowledge from outside the text  
- navigate through dense, detailed, and complex text |
Activity 6: An introduction to the readforward assessment tool

This blogpost is presented as reference, and will be useful as you work with the readforward tool in your program.

**readforward by Corrie Rhyasen Erdman**  
CALP Portal Blog, February 10, 2016

readforward is an informal reading assessment designed with learners in mind. It is low-stakes and uses reading tasks learners encounter in their daily lives. By working through the reading tasks in the tests, learners demonstrate what they know about reading... and what they don’t. The tasks they perform successfully reveal what the learner knows and can do with their reading skills. The tasks that they cannot complete give us a glimpse at the gaps in the learner’s reading knowledge.

Included with the readforward materials is an answer key that not only provides the test answers but also includes the reading skill being tested in each question. Knowing the reading skills for each question means that the test results identify the specific skills the learner needs to work on.

This information supports learning and instruction by:

- Providing a baseline. The test results mark the starting point to compare and measure learning progress.
- Informing the Learning Plan. The skills identified by the assessment articulate what specific skills to teach. These can be used as part of the Learning Plan.
- Monitoring learning progress. Having a baseline and knowing the skills to teach enables practitioners and learners to keep track of the development of reading skills.

**When to use readforward**

Before using readforward it is important to clarify if this assessment is the right assessment for the learner and the purpose. readforward is designed for learners who

- Are fluent in English
- Struggle with reading tasks in their work, home or community
- Want to improve their reading skills

Note: This assessment is not designed for learners with learning disabilities and will not provide accurate assessment results. However, the test materials can also be used as learning activities and are useful for developing reading skills for all learners.
readforward by Corrie Rhyasen Erdman
CALP Portal Blog, February 10, 2016 (continued)

Be clear about your intent and purpose for using the readforward assessment. If you are using the assessment to

- **Identify skill gaps** so you know where to focus the learning, then it is best to administer the test early on in the learning process, i.e. once the learner has indicated reading as a learning goal
- **Check learning progress**, then you can re-administer the test at a midway point in the learning process (there are 5 tests for each level so no need to reuse a test!).
- **Confirm that the learner has completed their goal or mastered the skills in a readforward level**, then a final test will allow you to compare the learner’s current reading skills to the initial and/or midpoint assessments. The results will also inform the next stage of learning should the learner choose to continue.

Note: readforward is intended to be used to inform the learner as well as the practitioner. Regardless of the purpose of the assessment, take the time to share the results with the learner in such a way that it affirms their existing skills and strengths and gives clear direction for further learning

readforward is available as a free download from www.readforward.ca

Take the time to review the guide before using the materials. And once you have used readforward check out the companion resources (leveled reading materials, teaching strategies, tips for assessment and planning for learning) on the Alberta Reading Benchmarks website. www.arbforadults.ca
Your task

1. Use the Jigsaw Activity, as described below, to learn about the readforward assessment tool.
2. Once you’ve become an “expert,” share what you know with the other participants.

Jigsaw activity

1. Divide into groups. If possible, have the same number of people in each group.
2. Each group will become “experts” on one topic. In this case, the topics will be the following parts of the readforward User Guide, which are reprinted for you below:
   - Topic 1: How to select and use a Locator Test
   - Topic 2: Preparing for the readforward Test
   - Topic 3: How to administer the Test
   - Topic 4: How to mark the test and interpret the results
   - Topic 5: Providing feedback to learners
3. In your group, review your section of the User Guide, and discuss what you learn.
4. Once you have had time to become “experts,” have each person in the group number off up to however many people there are in the group.
5. Then the participants form new groups according to their numbers. Each new group will have one or more people from each previous group. The members of the new groups then teach each other what they know about their topics.
Topic 1

How to Select and Use a Locator Test

Select a Level

It is important to select a test from a level that has a high probability of success for each learner. This is preferable to selecting a test from a level that may be too difficult, which may increase anxiety about taking tests.

Here are some ways to help you select the right test for each learner.

Think about what you know about the learner:

Your knowledge of each learner’s reading skills is crucial for effective test selection. You need to know what skills the learner has in relation to the skills used in each of readforward’s levels. This is particularly important in programs with groups of learners at different reading levels because, to choose the appropriate test for each learner, you will be selecting tests from more than one level. Use the Reading Skills table on the following pages, which lists all the reading skills used in each readforward level, to help you make decisions.

Review program entry requirements:

Relate the reading requirements for entry into the program, such as course marks or GED scores, with the reading skills outlined in the Reading Skills table on the following pages.

Use one of the readforward Locator Tests:

These tests, explained in detail in the coming pages, will help determine what level is appropriate to start with for each learner. The first Locator Test will identify learners’ reading proficiency as being at Levels 1B, 1C or 2A; the second Test will identify reading proficiency at Levels 2A, 2B, 2C or 3A.
Locator Test

readforward developed two Locator Tests to help practitioners determine which level would be the most appropriate starting place for a learner new to the readforward tests. The Locator Tests are similar in layout and format to the actual series of tests used in readforward.

One of the Locator Test is for lower reading skills and includes questions and texts that correlate to Levels 1B, 1C and 2A. If learners score 100 per cent on this Test, it is recommended that they take the second Locator Test in order to more closely identify the specific level that would be most beneficial for them.

The second Locator Test includes questions and texts with difficulty that correlates to Levels 2A, 2B and 2C. If learners score 100 per cent in the second Locator Test, then they can use Level 3A tests.

To use, select the Locator Test, print or photocopy it double-sided and staple it to ensure that the order of questions and texts is correct.

How readforward works

When administering either Locator Test, use the following directions:

• Please ensure that the location is conducive for test taking, that it is quiet and comfortable, and has adequate lighting.

• Inform the learners that the purpose of writing the Locator Tests independently is to help to determine their current reading proficiency.

• Inform learners that each Test has 30 questions and that the texts are balanced between prose that is continuous text in sentences or paragraphs, and documents such as graphs, charts or forms.

• Explain the layout of the Test. Let the learners know that most of the questions are on the left-hand side while the text is on the right-hand side of the Test. The only exception to this is that the first 10 questions in the first Locator Test (Levels 1B-1C-2A) have the questions above the text, not on the left-hand side.

• Explain that learners can write the answer below the question or directly on the text, depending on the instructions.

• Suggest that learners may find it helpful to read the question before reading the text.
Topic 2

Prepare for the Test

After you have selected a Test, print or photocopy it double-sided and staple it. To prepare for the Test, first take some time to review it so that you understand its format and purpose. Second, find the Answer Key for that specific Test to see how learners should answer the test questions. Third, review the reading skills of the specific level to understand the reading tasks learners will be required to perform on the Test.

Feedback from the pilot studies indicated that having a discussion about the readforward tests prior to taking them helped learners to better understand the purpose of testing reading and reduced their concerns about taking the test.

If you can, have a discussion about the test the day before learners write the Test. In the discussion, inform learners that readforward tests will help them better understand their reading skills because the results will show what they can already do and what reading skills they can improve. Explain that the examples used in the text imitate everyday reading tasks and so the tests are different from tests on a specific subject of study or course content.

Describe the unique layout of the test: the questions are on the left and the text where they will find the answers is on the right, or if there is only one question for a text, it is immediately above the text (latter applies only in Levels 1B and 1C). Tell the learners that the test will take up to an hour and that they can use pencil or pen. Inform learners that they will write the test independently. From a different test than the one that the learners will write, you can show an example of a question and text, to help them understand the unique layout.

Finally, explain the marking format that readforward uses, which might be different than what the learner has encountered before: each question is worth one mark; there are no partial marks; and spelling and grammar are not marked. These tests are not about passing or failing but instead help learners view reading skills as a continuum. In readforward, test scores help learners think about reading skills and strategies and, at a later date, when they take another readforward, they will be able to compare their scores to see how their reading has changed.
Topic 3

How to Administer the Test

Please read the previous section on preparing for the test if you have not discussed taking the test with learners prior to administering it. Practitioners can support learners by ensuring that the learning environment is conducive to writing tests.

Before distributing the tests, please ensure that the test is in the right order. Tests must be printed or photocopied double-sided and stapled.

Inform learners that readforward tests will help them better understand their reading skills.

Show the learners the layout of the test: the questions are on the left and the text or graphics are on the right, or if there is only one question for a text, it is immediately above the text or graphics (latter applies only in Levels 1B and 1C). Remind them to read each question carefully. They need to look to the text for the information they need to answer the questions.

Tell them they will have one hour to complete the test and that they can use pencil or pen. Although readforward does not prescribe a time limit for writing the tests, the tests were designed to be written in one hour or less. Let them know that spelling and grammar will not be marked, that each question is worth one mark and that there are no partial marks.

Instruct learners to read the question before reading the text. Learners will find the answer in the text. They must write the test independently. Tell the learners what to do once they have completed the test and provide any other information required by your program’s testing practice.
Topic 4

How to Mark the Test

General marking guidelines

• To mark a Test, use the Answer Key for each specific test. The answer key includes the question, answer and reading skill required to answer the question. The answer key represents the optimal answer. Possible alternate answers are indicated one of two ways: by a circle around the correct answer, or by a bulleted list of acceptable answers. Optional information is included in parentheses ( ); the answer would be correct whether it includes this information or not. It is important to note that if a learner includes information unrelated to the question, the answer should be marked incorrect. This is because sometimes learners include excessive information if they lack understanding of the content.

• Ignore spelling and grammar mistakes. Complete sentences are not required to answer the questions. Questions that include units of measure do not need to have the complete unit description in the answer to be correct. For example, “1,200” would be an acceptable answer for the question “What is the square footage of the house?” The answer does not need to be specifically “1,200 square feet.”

• Each question is worth one full mark and you may only give full marks. Answers are either correct or incorrect. Partial marks are not allowed because they would interfere with the validity of the reading skill level assessment given partially correct answers may reflect reading competency for a prior test level.

Tests from Levels 1B, 1C, 2A and 2B have 30 questions; Tests from Levels 2C and 3A have 20 questions. Marking Level 2C and 3A Tests will require more time even though there are fewer questions because, at these higher reading levels, learners need to demonstrate reading skills for more complex and longer texts, which require longer answers.

Once you have marked the tests, convert the number score into a percentage and place it on the scale on the results feedback form for that specific level. Provide written comments on the results feedback form that will reinforce the specific reading strategies and corresponding reading skills the learner can use to improve his or her reading.
How to Interpret the Results

readforward uses a reading skills competency-based approach, which means that a score of 80 per cent on any test in a level demonstrates that the learner can competently perform those specific skills. Learners’ scores will determine if they will continue in a particular level, move to a previous level or move onto the next level.

This reflects the design of readforward Tests, which have 20 per cent of questions at the previous level, 60 per cent of questions at the current level, and 20 per cent of questions from the next level. In other words, on any test, a score of:

0 to 20 per cent means that learners have not yet mastered the skills required by the previous level, and should try a test from that previous level to see where they score on the scale for that level.

21 to 79 per cent means that the test is in the correct level for the learners’ reading skills.

80 to 100 per cent means that the learners have mastered the skills in this level and are ready to move on to the next level in the series.

All levels use this scale, except for Levels 1B and 3A, and their particular method of scoring is explained later in the specific sections for each of those levels.

If the learners’ test scores fall within the brown sections of the scale, it indicates that they need to move to the previous or the next level. If the scores fall within the blue, middle section of the scale, it indicates that learners can continue to build their reading skills and take another test in the same level.
## Topic 5

### Provide feedback to the learners

“Learners liked the results feedback form because it gave immediate feedback and helped them talk about strategies.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>readforward highlights the importance of connecting test results to planning for learning. The results feedback form, properly used, is the way to make the connection between a test score, reading skills and reading strategies. Taking the time to go over the results feedback form with learners one-to-one or as a group is a crucial aspect of using readforward effectively. Use a results feedback form with every readforward test each learner takes.</th>
<th>Learners’ awareness of their learning process is a significant factor in improving their reading, and readforward created the results feedback form specifically to help learners understand their learning. Using the forms to review changes in reading between tests can contribute to a discussion about how learners perceive their improvement, thus building their awareness of the process of learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>readforward was designed for flexibility. It takes the reality of learners’ lives into consideration. When test scores are lower than previous scores, learners can consider external factors that may have influenced test results. When test scores are similar or higher than previous scores, it is also good practice to consider external factors that may have had some influence, specifically the reading strategies they used. Make sure this kind of discussion is part of the feedback process.</td>
<td>The results feedback form has two parts. One is the scale, described previously in the section on interpreting results, which includes the general reading skills that define the particular level. The other part, called “What to work on,” provides space for the practitioner and the learner to write specific reading skills and strategies that can be acted upon immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If this is the first time the learner is taking a test from the readforward series, explain that this test can be a baseline for measuring progress when using readforward tests in the future. Learners can keep their feedback forms to compare with the results of the next test they take.</td>
<td>If learners have already taken a readforward test, they can compare the scores between this one and those taken before, and use the results feedback forms to zero in on reading strategies that can help them to progress.</td>
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</table>
The following is included for your reference and has information on PIAAC and CLB and is also available on the CALP portal.

**PIAAC & CLB**

PIAAC tests reading, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments.

CLB assesses reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

The two frameworks only have reading skills in common. Since English Language Learners need all of the language skills to function well in life, PIAAC has limited use for English language learning.

There is no comparative framework between PIAAC and the CLBs. There is a comparative framework between the CLBs and the Essential Skills framework in Canada (see link below). But there is no assessment tool or framework which correlates CLBs to any other international survey such as PIAAC, IALS or IALSS.

[http://www.language.ca/index.cfm?Voir=sections&id=17367&M=4038&Sequence_No=17367&Parent=0&niveau=1&repertoire_no=2137991327](http://www.language.ca/index.cfm?Voir=sections&id=17367&M=4038&Sequence_No=17367&Parent=0&niveau=1&repertoire_no=2137991327)

Below is some additional information about both PIAAC and CLB which may provide more context about this.

**PIAAC – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies**

Description quoted from the Canadian PIAAC website:

PIAAC is the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, an international assessment of the foundational information-processing skills required to participate in the social and economic life of advanced economies in the 21st century.

An initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), PIAAC provides a highly detailed survey of skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PS-TRE) among adults between the ages of 16 and 65 in over 40 countries and sub-national regions, along with all of Canada’s provinces and territories. These core skills form the basis for cultivating the other, higher-level skills necessary to function at home, school, work, and in the community.

Source: [http://www.piaac.ca/590/FAQ.html](http://www.piaac.ca/590/FAQ.html)
Organizations can purchase access codes to the Education & Skills Assessment Online. This assessment does align with PIAAC and individual learners in programs may be assessed in this way. Note that assessment is available in English, but access codes can only be purchased in American dollars or Euros.

**Education & Skills Assessment Online**

Description quoted from the website:

Education & Skills Online is an assessment tool designed to provide individual-level results that are linked to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) measures of literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. All results are comparable to the measures used in PIAAC and can be benchmarked against the national and international results available for the participating countries. In addition, the assessment contains non-cognitive measures of skill use, career interest, health and well-being, and soon also behavioral competencies.


**CLB – Canadian Language Benchmarks**

Description quoted from the website:

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is the centre of expertise in support of the national standards in English and French for describing, measuring and recognizing second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada.

The Centre promotes their recognition and use as practical, fair and reliable national standards of second language proficiency throughout Canada in educational, training, community and workplace settings.

Activity 7: readforward overview and using the Locator Test

readforward Step-by-Step

Learner wants to improve reading

Choose readforward Locator Test

Following the conversation, choose one of the two Locator Tests

Administer readforward Locator Test

Choose a quiet, comfortable place to write test

Start with a conversation, asking questions such as: What do you read now? What would you like to read?

One test is for lower reading skills and one is for higher

Explain to the learner the test will show what reading level they are at

Explain the layout of the test to the learner

Suggest the learner reads each question before reading the accompanying text
Strategic Conversations: Adult Literacy Assessment and Measuring Progress

Participant Workbook

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**readforward Step-by-Step (continued)**

- **Score the readforward Locator Test**
  - Ignore spelling and grammatical mistakes
  - Each question is worth one full mark
  - Answers are correct or incorrect - there are no partial marks
  - Use the Locator Test Score Sheet to record the score
  - Determine the learner’s reading level based on the Locator Test Score

- **Prepare for the readforward test**
  - Find and prepare the test
  - Be sure you review it beforehand
  - Find the Answer Key
  - Review the reading skills of the specific level

- **Discuss the test with the learner before they write the test**
  - This test will show what they can already do and what skills they can improve
  - Describe the layout of the test
  - First, show an example of a question and text
  - The learner should read the question before reading the text. They will find the answer in the text
  - Explain the marking format: each question is worth one mark
  - This is not about passing or failing, but about where they are on a reading continuum

- Use the Locator Test Score Sheet to record the score

- Determine the learner’s reading level based on the Locator Test Score
Mark the *readforward* Test.

- Use the Answer Key
- Ignore spelling and grammatical mistakes
- Each question worth one mark
- Each question is correct or incorrect
- Convert the number score into a percentage
- Place the score on the results feedback form

Interpret the results

- 0-20% means learners haven’t mastered these skills and should try a test from the previous level
- 21-79% means the test is in the correct level for the learners skills
- 80-100% means the learner has already mastered these skills and can move to the next level

Provide feedback to learners

- Connect the results feedback form to planning for learning
- Take the time to go over the results feedback form with learner
- Review the general reading skills and what to work on
- Write strategies on the feedback form that can be acted on right away

More feedback

- Help learners think about their test results - they can consider external factors that may influence the test result
- Help learners see progress over time
- Help learners build an awareness of how they learn

Marking learner progress

- There are five test options in each level
- When the learner is ready, they can take another test at this level and compare the results with those from the previous test

Resources

- Go to ARB website for additional resources on the following:
  - Creating a learning plan
  - Content to be taught at each level
  - Teaching strategies
  - Habits to be encouraged at each level

Help learners think about their test results - they can consider external factors that may influence the test result
Help learners see progress over time
Help learners build an awareness of how they learn

Go to ARB website for additional resources on the following:
Creating a learning plan
Content to be taught at each level
Teaching strategies
Habits to be encouraged at each level
Your task

1. Review and score the Sample Locator Test and using the Sample Locator Test Answer Key.
2. Use the Locator Test Score Sheet to record the score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Results</th>
<th>Suggested placement based on total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Score*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Each question is worth one mark (see User Guide, Mark the Test, for more information)
Activity 8: Using the readforward Test

Your task:

1. Review and score the sample readforward Test Level 2A Diamond, using the sample readforward Test Answer Key.

2. Use the Results Feedback Form to record the learner’s score.

Results Feedback Form Level 2A
Activity 9: Using assessment results

Your task

1. Create a learning plan, using results from:
   - The Results Feedback Form, which will indicate strengths and gaps
   - The Answer Key, which shows the specific reading skills needed for each question
   - The ARB At-a-Glance Teaching Strategies for Level 2A, found below
   - The sample learning plan, also found below
At a Glance ARB Teaching Strategies

The Alberta Reading Benchmarks approach to reading is task-based and focuses on reading skills. This guide outlines the strategies for levels 1a to 2b practitioners can use to increase learners’ reading skills and therefore the number and types of reading tasks they are able to complete with different reading materials. These strategies are provided as suggestions for literacy practitioners to adopt as starting points in their work with adult learners in general. They are by no means meant to be prescriptive. When working with individuals, practitioners develop their own awareness of what methods do or don’t resonate with learners.

General Approaches for Teaching Reading

*Teaching strategies* are those the practitioner uses during lessons (e.g., using alphabet cards, word banks, or cut-up sentences). *Learning strategies* are taught to the learner for use when reading or completing reading tasks (e.g., sounding out words or using visual clues).

A **top-down approach** to teaching reading means that the focus is the whole message, whereas a **bottom-up approach** focuses on the individual words and phrases that make up the message (Scribner 2005, 178). The best practices combine both approaches. A balanced approach allows the practitioner to select the strategies that are best suited to individual learners, the reading task assigned, and the learner context (Campbell 2003, 1).

**Vocabulary Teaching.** Learning activities that focus on words themselves are essential for increasing the learners’ vocabularies and improving their reading ability. Repeated exposure to the same vocabulary is necessary for the learner to recognize a word and remember its meaning (Sonbul and Schmitt 2010, 253).

**Explicit Strategy Instruction** is the practice of clearly and systematically teaching students the learning strategies they need to complete reading tasks. It is important to start with what the learner already knows so that the practitioner builds upon the learner’s existing abilities. If the learner can also determine how s/he knows something, s/he can then apply the same strategies to discover the unknown.

**Scaffolding** refers to the amount of support the practitioner provides to learners. As learners become more skilled and confident, practitioners reduce support incrementally. Types of practitioner support include pre- and post-teaching activities, modelling, supported practice, and explicit strategy instruction.

**Recycling** refers to practising the same vocabulary and reading skills in many ways to provide repeated, but varied, instruction and practice of strategies and skills.

**Spinning** refers to the idea that strategies are introduced and subsequently presented repeatedly through the Alberta Reading Benchmarks levels. As the level increases, the difficulty of the vocabulary, the complexity and length of the text, and expectations of the learner also increase. You’ll notice in this guide that the same teaching and learning strategies are recommended at many levels of the Alberta Reading Benchmarks; the same method is used at increasing levels of difficulty.

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1 The higher levels are not addressed here because they are considered above the level of basic literacy.
Glossary

Authentic Materials: Texts from everyday life that are not created specifically for educational purposes (e.g., a daily newspaper, text messages, instructions).

Decoding: Using various strategies to identify a printed word.

Document: Text such as graphs, charts or forms.

Eliciting: Using guiding questions to reveal the learner’s knowledge or lead the learner to an answer.

Practitioner: An individual who teaches or tutors.

Prose: Continuous text in sentences or paragraphs.

Sight Words: Words that are identified instantly without any need for decoding.

Task-based Activity: Any activity that builds capacity to complete real-life tasks.

Text: Anything that can be read.

Word Ring: A collection of single words written on flashcards and kept on a metal ring.

Word Bank: A collection of words in a notebook, on a wall, or in another location.

References


Level 2A

Vocabulary Building
Word banks
Word banks are collections of words from student lessons. At this level words could be grouped either by categories (food, clothing, housing), spelling patterns (flight, night, flight), or in word families (talk, talking, talked).

Decoding and Meaning Making
Sound it out
The use of phonics or sound-letter correspondence is essential, but limited by the learner’s knowledge of the alphabet, the oddities of English spelling, and pronunciation errors.

Use visual clues
If a word is unknown the learner looks to accompanying pictures or graphics for a hint about what the word is.

Visualize
Good readers make a picture in their head as they read which helps them to construct meaning. See level 1B/1C for an example.

Part of the word known
In this strategy the learner looks for something familiar in the word and then uses other strategies to complete decoding the word. See level 1B/1C for an example.

Chunking
Chunking is a similar strategy to “parts of the word known” except that with chunking the learner looks at the morphemes, or the parts of the word that alter the meaning of the root word. For example, if the learner encounters the word learner and s/he knows what the word learn means and knows that the suffix -er means a person who does the root word, then s/he knows the meaning of learner.

Skip an unknown word
Skipping an unknown word encourages learners to use the rest of the sentence and other strategies to decode a word and prevents the learner from getting stuck on unknown vocabulary. See level 1B/1C for an example.

Context clues
Context clues are used when the learner does not know the meaning of a word in a sentence. See level 1B/1C for more information.

Multiple strategy use
Good readers use a combination of strategies. For example, a reader may look at the first sound, recognize part of the word s/he knows, and look at a picture to decode a single word.
Level 2A

Comprehension
Predicting and activating background knowledge
These strategies are teaching and learning strategies to encourage the learner to think about what s/he already knows and apply it to what s/he is reading. They are a good way to introduce new reading material. See level 1B/1C for an example of these strategies.

Pre-teach vocabulary
Pre-teach vocabulary that is topic specific and key to understanding the text before beginning to read. Published teaching reading materials often identify these words for you, either in bold or at the start of the text. See the level 1B/1C section for an example.

Retelling
Retelling is a good teaching strategy for checking comprehension and for consolidating learning. When retelling, the learner puts the text away and tells what the text was about—from memory and in their own words. This can be tricky for learners who often try to memorize rather than understand a text if they know they’ll have to retell the information or message they read.

Language experience
Language experience involves writing about an experience and then using the learner-generated text as reading material. The learner generates the sentences verbally and the practitioner acts as a scribe. See the level 1B/1C section for more information and an example.

Running records
Running records are a good strategy for error analysis and can provide the learner with positive feedback. It will show practitioners the learner’s repetitive errors to be focused on.

Two copies of the text are necessary for a running record. Ideally the practitioner copy is a plain copy with widely spaced text. As the learner reads aloud, the practitioner:

- puts a checkmark above each word read correctly;
- crosses out words that have been omitted;
- crosses out words that are substituted with another word—the substituted word is written above the crossed-out word;
- writes in additional words.

If the learner makes many print-based errors like substituting went for want, lessons should focus on reading for meaning using learning strategies like skipping an unknown word and teaching strategies like the use of clozes. If the learner makes meaning-based errors like shut the back door instead of lock the door, lessons should focus on attending closely to print. Tracking with a finger as they read may help reduce these kinds of errors. Another excellent strategy is to read the text aloud back to the learner as s/he reads it, including any error. Most often the learner can then self-correct the mistake.

Clozes
Clozes are texts with some words blanked out that can be determined using the meaning of the sentence. Clozes can be found in many published texts or created by practitioners. To create a cloze yourself, blank out a limited number of predictable words in a text appropriate to the learner level. Leave the first line complete to provide the learner with the context.
Level 2A

Repeated readings:
As the learner can read increasingly longer texts, it is important to provide opportunities for repeated readings of the same text to increase learner fluency and comprehension. Repeated exposure to the same words and phrases is critical to processing them automatically. Automaticity reduces a learner’s need to decode frequently. (Frequent decoding reduces reading comprehension) Following are some suggested ways a learner can read the same text.
> Read silently.
> Read aloud to oneself.
> Read aloud to the practitioner, other learners, or someone at home.
> Answer questions about the text.
> Write questions about the text.
> Sketch a picture or diagram of the information presented in the text.

Task Completion
Scanning
> Scanning is the strategy used by good readers to locate information quickly and easily. Instead of reading every word of a text, they look for key words, dates, numbers, or other hints such as capital letters for proper nouns to find the information they need.
## Learning Plan Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills I need to learn</th>
<th>I will know I can do this when</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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Activity 10: A brief review of the ARB and readforward

We can use assessments in various ways.

- To set a baseline at the beginning of a program so that we can measure learning at the end—this is part of summative assessment.
- To inform instruction during the program—this is formative assessment.
- To measure progress at the end of a program—this is the completion of summative assessment.

Assessments are necessary to respond to funder requirements, and doing assessments will make not only program design but also the reporting process easier to do and much more responsive.

- Assessment helps staff understand where the learner needs to focus, which in turn helps with goal-setting. It’s therefore a necessary step in the process of meeting the CALP requirement to name learners’ goals.
- Also, assessment results can help staff actually measure learner confidence rather than recalling what a learner might have said about their confidence or asking them about it directly.

It’s important to create an assessment process that includes learners.

- The assessment tools are just one part of the process.
- The job of CALP staff is encourage learners to be part of the assessment process, so that learners become active rather than passive recipients of learning.
- Instead, learners are empowered to monitor their own learning.
- CALP staff may consider asking learners, “Have you done assessments before? How do you feel about assessments?” And telling them, “We’re going to do this together.”
- CALP staff need to define their terms about assessment, or co-define the terms with learners, so learners can own the language. (This ties to persistence for learners, as described by Stephen Reder in the IAFL course).
### Activity 11: Reflections and Intentions

**Your task**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned today and how you might use this information.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Name <strong>two</strong> actions you intend to take to help you improve your learner assessment practice when you return to your program.</th>
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<th>What supports or preparation will you need to carry out these intended actions?</th>
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<th>Share with one other person about your intentions and the support you will need.</th>
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### Networking Notes

You may have already gathered some networking notes if you have completed the “Who’s Done That” icebreaker.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Organization</th>
<th>Contact Info</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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### Who’s Done That?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who’s Done That</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visited the CALP portal</td>
<td>Has experience with adult literacy assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Attended an IAFL workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Responsible for CALP reporting</td>
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<td>Used the Alberta Reading Benchmarks</td>
<td>Developed advertising for their literacy program</td>
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<td>Tutored an adult literacy learner</td>
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<td>Does community presentations on adult literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has experience with informal assessment</td>
<td>Has facilitated training</td>
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<td>Was a Girl Guide/Brown Owl or Scout</td>
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<td>Posted on the CALP portal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has knowledge about Board Development</td>
<td>Is good at using PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has knowledge about community needs assessments</td>
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<td>Is good at developing Lesson Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developed a website</td>
<td>Has taken an online course on the CALP portal</td>
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<td>Applied for a grant</td>
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<td>Is good at planning events</td>
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