



Vol. 3 / No. 3 Fall 2011

IN THIS ISSUE...

Designing STAR Success
Successful STAR Implementation: Looking Back, Moving Forward
Opening the Tool Kit
Shining STARS
OVAE Update
Announcing STAR's New National Cadre Members
Upcoming Literacy Events
Ask Our Experts
We Want to Hear From You!

Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) www.startoolkit.org

DESIGNING STAR SUCCESS

While STAR training serves as a blueprint for creating, supporting, and sustaining the instructional changes required to improve literacy instruction for intermediate-level adult learners, the implementation of evidence-based reading instruction within STAR programs varies from state to state. As Jane Meyer wrote in the spring 2010 issue of *The STAR Gazer*, the successful implementation of STAR requires that “teachers, program administrators, and state leaders who understand the need for systemic change are willing to draw up blueprints, don their hardhats, and begin the work of remodeling” reading instruction. In this issue, we shine a light on STAR programs in three states, Massachusetts, Georgia, and Minnesota, and ask their leaders to provide readers with a glimpse into their successful construction and implementation of evidence-based reading instruction. In the article “Successful STAR Implementation: Looking Back, Moving Forward,” Dr. Mary Beth Curtis invites everyone involved with STAR to reflect upon where STAR has been, where the initiative is presently, and how we can achieve and sustain the best possible outcomes for the program, its teachers, and its learners. Jane Meyer describes how to access top STAR implementation resources on the STAR website and within the STAR Tool Kit in “Opening the Tool Kit.” Finally, STAR success is continually expanding, and in this issue we announce and celebrate STAR’s seven new National Cadre members. ■

SUCCESSFUL STAR IMPLEMENTATION: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Dr. Mary Beth Curtis, author of the STAR Tool Kit and Director of the Center for Special Education at Lesley University

Suppose you were asked to name some concerns you have about evidence-based reading instruction for adult learners. What would you say?

Some of you would point out how little research we have showing the teaching approaches, methods, and materials that can produce the most growth for adult learners. And you’d be spot-on about our limited evidence base. But what if I told you that, as necessary and welcome as more research would be, our ability to get better outcomes for our learners isn’t likely to improve all that much from new evidence alone?

What makes me say that? Research by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)¹ and others has shown repeatedly that, while

continued on page 2



OVAE UPDATE

The Literacy Information and Communication System (<http://lincs.ed.gov/>), commonly referred to as LINCS, is a dissemination and professional development system, providing information on a wide variety of literacy relevant topics, issues, and resources.

LINCS provides high-quality evidence-based online resources for adult educators at the state and local level. The LINCS network includes catalogued literacy resources, special collections of materials such as workplace literacy, English as a Second Language, and assessment. New topics will include Science, Financial Literacy and Correctional Education.

OVAE’s continued investment in LINCS signals its intent to more strategically utilize LINCS, to assist states and local adult education agencies in promoting teacher effectiveness and evidence-based instruction in adult education. For information on the results of the recent LINCS competition please go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/ovaeconnection/2011/11032011.html>



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have a STAR story or a success to share in the next newsletter, please send an email to projectstar@dtihq.com with “Newsletter” in the subject line.

Successful STAR implementation, continued...

we are getting better at identifying evidence-based programs and practices, our understanding of how to implement these with fidelity and good outcomes still has quite a long way to go. Why? NIRN's work suggests the following explanation: "The speed and effectiveness of implementation may depend upon knowing exactly what has to be in place to achieve the desired results for consumers and stakeholders: no more, and no less" (pg. 25). In other words, if we haven't prepared the field, we shouldn't expect the seeds to grow.

In the case of STAR, what do we need to have in place for efficient and effective implementation? Again, NIRN's research can guide our thinking, pointing to a number of questions we should be asking ourselves.

- **How successful have we been in getting the right people trained?**

STAR is a reading reform initiative to advance the use of evidence-based reading instruction for intermediate-level adult basic education (ABE) students. In order to make this reform happen, though, every key stakeholder needs to understand what's involved and have "buy-in." How many of our current intermediate-level ABE teachers of reading have attended STAR institutes? How many program directors? What about the state's professional developers and members of the state leadership team?

- **Are we delivering training that is high quality?**

STAR institutes include approximately 40 hours of training and technical assistance, spread out over two to six institutes, with ample time in between institutes for participants to try out practices and receive feedback. As the states assume responsibility for STAR training, how much fidelity to this model has there been? Is the quality of training and technical assistance being evaluated throughout, and the results used for improvement?

- **What is the quality and extent of implementation following the STAR institutes?**

Once participants leave training, are diagnostic assessments getting done? Are results from those assessments being used to plan and deliver instruction? Are we monitoring the outcomes of that instruction? Are we providing feedback and assistance at the classroom and program levels to identify challenges and assist with possible solutions?

- **What has been put in place to ensure sustainability?**

What policies and procedures have we put into place to make sure that time and materials are available to conduct diagnostic assessments and to plan and deliver instruction? Do programs have enrollment and placement policies that support instruction focused on intermediate-level readers? Do the states have trainers available and funds to support STAR training and technical assistance, along with other kinds of professional development needed to support sustained implementation?

[continued on page 3](#)

ANNOUNCING STAR'S NEW NATIONAL CADRE MEMBERS

The STAR National Training Network is pleased to announce that seven new members have been added to the National Training Cadre. Each new member has enjoyed an amazing career in the field of adult education, which will serve them well as they continue their work and involvement with STAR. The National Cadre's expansion reflects the continued growth of the evidence-based reading instruction model and the long-term sustainability of STAR implementation. Read below about each member's career in adult education.

Barbara Bowen has over 20 years of professional experience as a literacy educator and staff developer. She has worked in both the K-12 and postsecondary levels. Currently, Barbara is a professional development specialist in reading with the Rhode Island Adult Education Professional Development Center.

Deborah Britton has been engaged in adult education since 1989. Currently, she is director of Wilkes Family Central at Lincoln Heights in Wilkesboro, North Carolina and coordinator for ESL instruction at Wilkes Community College. She is also involved in developing curriculum for ESL students that links language instruction to civics and citizenship topics.

Margaret (Marn) Frank has almost 20 years of experience in the field of Adult Basic Education. She has worked as an ABE teacher, program coordinator, and adult learning disabilities specialist and trainer. She is currently the reading & STAR coordinator for ATLAS (ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System) at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

[continued on page 3](#)

Successful STAR Implementation, continued...

As we examine what our answers to these questions tell us about our success in implementing STAR, I'd recommend one further question for our consideration. The National Research Council has just issued a call for expanding the evidence base on adult literacy instruction.² Do we have in place what we will need to put new research into practice? ■

¹ Fixsen, D.L., Naoom, S.F., Blasé, K.A., Friedman, R.M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231). Available at: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/resources/detail.cfm?resourceID=31>

² National Research Council (2011). *Improving adult literacy instruction: Options for practice and research*. Committee on Learning Sciences: Foundations and Applications to Adolescent and Adult Literacy. Alan Lesgold & Melissa Welch-Ross (Eds.). Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Available at: http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13242



SHINING STARS

Massachusetts Case Study

By Lori Davella, Director and Pre-GED Instructor,
Charlestown Adult Education

In November of 2010, Charlestown Adult Education (just across the harbor from downtown Boston) had the privilege to participate in the Massachusetts STAR Institutes. I was thrilled that we were given the opportunity to learn and implement techniques that would enhance the reading skills of our Pre-GED students. At that time, I was unaware of the amazing transformation that the STAR program was going to have on my class. As soon as I began to facilitate the STAR evidence-based instruction in my class, my teaching became more focused and explicit. The students became completely engaged in the activities and soon realized that they were going to have control over their own learning. They eagerly participated in activities including pairing, small groups, larger groups, and individual learning. They now understand that they are not going to learn solely from me, but also from themselves and each other.

Each week, the students learn five new words as their vocabulary lesson. The vocabulary lesson starts on Monday with the use of the Knowledge Rating Chart. This chart allows students to identify the depth of their existing knowledge on each newly introduced word. As they write each word on the chart, I say the word for pronunciation and they repeat it. We break it down into syllables and identify the syllable with the most stress. We also convert the word into other parts of speech if applicable. Once this is done, because they are very eager to define the words and find out if their ideas are correct, I give them a few minutes to discuss the meaning of the words with a partner. I then give them explicit definitions, which are followed by a group discussion on the words. There is so much enthusiasm involved in these discussions. Students share personal experiences involving new words, times when they've heard the word,

continued on page 4

New National Cadre, continued...

Cindy Heimbach began her career in adult education in 1989 as a literacy volunteer. Today, she is director of the Grenada Adult Education Center in Grenada, Mississippi. In 2007, she was honored as ABE Director of the Year for the Northern Region in Mississippi.

Mark Kearns has over 38 years of education experience. Throughout his career, Mark has taught ABE, GED, ELL and associate degree-level writing courses. In 1985, he was named Teacher of the Year by the Wisconsin Association for Adult and Continuing Education.

Carey Reid has nearly 30 years of experience in the field of education. He has taught English as a Second Language in the U.S. and abroad; adult basic skills in the areas of reading and writing; college courses in ESOL; and served as a program director. Carey currently is the staff developer for Licensure, Curriculum, and Assessment for System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) in Massachusetts.

Posy Thurow has over 30 years of experience as a reading teacher. Currently, she is an ABE/Program Prep reading teacher at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin, where she is focusing on overseeing and growing the STAR program at the college level. ■



ASK OUR EXPERTS

In future issues of *The STAR Gazer*, implementers will have the opportunity to submit questions to our experts. If you have a question that you would like the experts to address, please submit it to projectstar@dthq.com.

Shining STARs, continued...

but not understood it, and how and where they think they can use the word. This is everyone's favorite part of the vocabulary lesson and is key to having students retain the words.

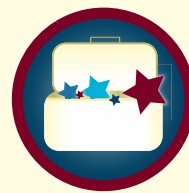
On Wednesdays, the vocabulary lesson is continued using the Quadrant Chart, which has been identified by all of my students as the most valuable chart we use with the most significant impact on retaining the new words. Any student in the class can and will tell you that this chart gives not just the meaning of the word, but the complete picture of each word, and these are the reasons why the approach works. Students follow up these lessons by working with partners on sentence completions, yes or no questioning, Cloze passages, and writing original sentences throughout the rest of the week. Homework consists of listening for the newly acquired words outside of the classroom and writing down their experiences to share with the class.

Also on Mondays and Fridays, students are grouped according to their DAR scores for fluency (Mondays) and comprehension (Fridays), using different stories for each. Each group in the class works on fluency at the same time, first by using the STAR method of popcorn reading. Once a group is done, they choose the paragraph that was most difficult to read fluently and I move around echo reading that paragraph with them. Next, they participate in repeated reading with their groups to enhance fluency, accuracy, rate and prosody. The students have seen tremendous improvement in themselves in all of these areas. As a result, they never tire of this process because they know that repetition is the best way to enhance and maintain these skills.

Of all the techniques used in the STAR program and in my class, the most amazing transformation that I have had the incredible pleasure of witnessing is in reading comprehension. People always say that a person who is completely involved in a situation, or perhaps too close to something, is unable to see changes. However, I have watched students who have struggled their whole lives to identify main ideas of stories and recognize significant information transform into students who eagerly participate in groups and work with others to correctly comprehend what they are reading. I can clearly overhear them using higher-level academic and thinking skills during these discussions. They and I both know that they are truly learning from these methods, and we all recognize their value.

Overall, the STAR program has brought confidence to people who were less than confident, has taught people the skills to learn how to learn, has created a closer class that is more willing to work with and help others, and has provided students with skills that go way beyond the classroom in areas of reading, spelling, vocabulary and much more. Although the concrete evidence is the very large learning gains my students achieved, for me the most valuable evidence is the testimonials from my students. They know they are learning and they have commented that the class is so interesting and fun that they can't believe it's over at the end of the day.

continued on page 5



OPENING THE TOOL KIT

Jane Meyer, Adult Basic and Literacy Education Coordinator for Canton City Schools

Both the NIRN report referenced by Dr. Mary Beth Curtis in this issue's "Successful STAR Implementation: Looking Back, Moving Forward," and our own experiences with STAR clearly indicate that knowledge of evidence-based practices needs to be coupled with knowledge of how to implement these practices, in order to ensure STAR program success. The STAR Tool Kit has several resources to assist you with implementation:

- Clicking on "Resources" on the STAR homepage (before you put in your password) will lead you to four issue papers about implementing evidence-based reading instruction.
- In the Tool Kit, you can find resources to help with issues surrounding managed enrollment and leveling of classes. These resources are located in the "Planning" section under "What are some Key Points for Planning."
- In the Tool Kit, researcher Judy Alamprese identifies questions that a program and/or state could use to think about which implementation elements are already in place and which might need to be strengthened. You can find these questions in the "Next Steps" section under "What Factors Affect Success."
- In the Tool Kit, all STAR Certified Trainers have access to the Technical Assistance Planning Guide, which contains ideas and resources to support programs and states in implementation. The Technical Assistance Planning Guide is located in the "Trainer Materials" section. ■

Shining STARs, continued...

I have been teaching in the ABE field for 20 years and STAR is, by far, the most effective reading instruction targeting the intermediate level that I have ever implemented. I am so proud and grateful to be part of this evolution that will undoubtedly change the lives of so many, as it did for both my class and me.

Georgia Case Study

*By Stephanie Rooks, Adult Education Lead Instructor,
Gwinnett Technical College*

In January 2012, the Gwinnett Technical College's Adult Education Department in Lawrenceville, Georgia will begin its fifth year of evidence-based reading instruction. At the inception of our STAR program, we had 41 students, two afternoon classes per week, one classroom, and most important, two enthusiastic, committed and hard-working instructors – Alex deBruyn and Carol Newman. As of this writing, we have served 435 students, we hold four night classes, and our daytime STAR program now meets at our local YMCA, allowing us to increase to eight classes per week. As our number of classes increased, so did our number of STAR certified instructors. Georgeanne Davidson and Vivia Pitter joined the team in early 2010.

Our foundation was built on one crucial component: accurate student assessment and class placement based on those results. This prompted the formation of two STAR classes. STAR-1 heavily emphasizes alphabets and vocabulary, along with some fluency instruction. STAR-2 includes all of these as well, but comprehension is introduced. This method allows the instructor to focus on strengthening the student's areas of weakness.

As we all know, starting a STAR program requires detailed class planning, assessing, designing classrooms and choosing and ordering the best instructional materials. The professional development leadership at the Technical College System of Georgia provided us with training, follow-up and networking opportunities. Locally, we have been fortunate that from the beginning, our department director Alberto Leyva has not only been a STAR proponent, but a **student** proponent. His support allows our instructors to get paid for all additional planning time and because of his efforts, we now have our daytime "STAR-only" site at the YMCA!

The most essential element of the STAR program is our students. Prior to assessing anyone for the program, we emphasize the level of commitment and responsibility needed to improve their reading skills, with the ultimate goal of progressing in their classes so that they can eventually take the GED test. Consequently, they have thrived! Our students rarely miss class or drop out of the program, but the most telling indicator of STAR's impact is that the students' success has served as a recruitment opportunity. Each quarter, we get a number of requests from both interested students and teachers recommending students to be assessed.

continued on page 6



UPCOMING LITERACY EVENTS

National Reading Conference

November 30 - December 3
Jacksonville, FL

American Reading Forum Annual Conference

December 7 - December 10
Sanibel Island, FL

Linguistic Society of America Annual (LSA) Meeting

January 5 - January 8
Portland, OR

Modern Language Association of America (MLA) Annual Meeting

January 5 - January 8
Seattle, WA

DECEMBER

			Nov.30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JANUARY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

continued on page 6

Shining STARS, continued...

Minnesota Case Study

By Margaret (Marn) Frank, Reading and STAR Coordinator,
Hamline University

Over the past three years, Minnesota STAR Trainers have gained great respect for the statement: “STAR implementation occurs along a continuum.” Our experiences have taught us that each ABE program (or site) implements evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI) at a unique rate. This rate is often relative to factors such as the STAR administrator’s authority to coordinate complex change, the level of managed enrollment structures already in place (or not), the number of students at low or high intermediate levels, and/or the capacity of trained staff to conduct diagnostic reading assessments. Understanding “the reality of the continuum” guides our trainer team in providing technical assistance support and assurance that moving ahead incrementally will result in STAR implementation. Metro North, a large, suburban ABE consortium comprised of multiple sites, exemplifies how STAR occurs along a continuum with eventual success.

During 2008-2009 (STAR 09), Metro North’s adult education director, one site leader, and four teachers participated in STAR Institutes. All were committed to making STAR work, but encountered difficulties with full implementation. During 2009-2010 (STAR 10), four more teachers participated in trainings and experienced similar challenges. At a spring meeting facilitated by two trainers, it was agreed that all cluster or site leaders – administrators with the real authority to make programmatic changes – needed to attend STAR Institutes.

During 2010-2011 (STAR 11), two clusters and one site leader completed STAR trainings along with three teachers from existing STAR sites. By the spring - *just one year after our meeting* – seven STAR classes were solidly in place (and still are) at five Metro North sites: Anoka Technical College, Blaine, Brooklyn Center, Elk River, and Forest Lake.

This year (STAR 12) brings the third cluster supervisor to STAR trainings and two teachers from Columbia Heights and St. Francis. By next spring, I am optimistic Metro North will have implemented or sustained a total of nine STAR classes serving many intermediate-level ABE and ESL students. Collectively and individually, Metro North’s ABE director, cluster or site leaders, and teachers are “Shining STARS.” ■



UPCOMING LITERACY EVENTS

Upcoming Events, continued...

National Association of Bilingual Education Annual Conference

February 15-17
Dallas, TX

Learning Disabilities Association of America Annual Conference

February 22-25
Chicago, IL

FEBRUARY						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					