

Facilitating an Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (EBRI) Study Circle (SC)

By Marn Frank, EBRI SC Developer and Facilitator



Background

The EBRI SC format and companion guide, *Evidence-Based Reading Instruction, a resource for expanding the use of EBRI in Minnesota Adult Basic Education (MN ABE)*, were originally developed in 2012. Since then, there have been many updates, revisions, and in 2021, a necessary shift to virtual facilitation and resource sharing.

As described on page 4 of the companion guide, EBRI integrates findings and conclusions from two valid and reliable measures of success:

1. **Scientific reading research studies** (more than one), where data is collected according to experimental methods, analyzed with statistical methods, and findings are scrutinized by journal reviewers from the same or similar fields. There are a limited number of scientific reading research studies in the field of adult literacy.
2. **Professional wisdom**, where adult literacy experts (again, more than one) consider additional findings from K-12 language and reading, adolescent reading, ESOL, and LD research bases and reach consensus on which recommended practices are most effective for improving adult reading achievement. Their conclusions about 'what works' fill in the gaps of limited scientific reading research studies in the field of adult literacy.

In MN ABE, **Practitioner wisdom**, the knowledge that managers and teachers gain from instruction and reflection, is also highly valued. In fact, it was practitioner wisdom that inspired the original EBRI SC format and content! Many practitioners who participated in STAR trainings and implemented STAR practices (targeted for Low/High Intermediate Basic Education readers) recognized that some of these practices could apply to other readers at NRS Beginning ABE Literacy (if Roman alphabet skills are present), Beginning Basic Education, Low/High Intermediate ESL (if Roman alphabet skills are present), Advanced ESL, and possibly Low Adult Secondary Education. Over the years, many other practitioners who participated in EBRI SCs and implemented EBRI practices across a broader range of levels have successfully proven that application in their ABE/ESL classrooms and programs.

EBRI Practices

There are five testing or teaching practices that have been proven to improve the reading achievement of struggling adult readers across NRS levels (recently updated):

1. Conduct diagnostic reading assessments (DRA) in addition to standardized reading tests like CASAS or TABE
2. Use DRA results to plan and provide explicit instruction in the primary reading components of need
3. Maximize student engagement (cognitive or individual and contextual or classroom) in reading instruction
4. Select relevant and leveled reading materials, teaching activities, online resources, and websites
5. Organize EBRI routines based on students' need(s), monitor their effectiveness, and adjust as needed

CCRS Connections

EBRI practices for teaching the four reading components connect with a number of ELA Reading Foundational Skills (RF) or CCR Anchors at Levels A-C or K-5 – and beyond. Here is a sample:

RF.2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). (Alphabetics)

RF.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. (Alphabetics)

RF.4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. (Fluency)

CCR Anchor 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (Comprehension)

CCR Anchor 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (Comprehension)

CCR Anchor 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (Comprehension)

CCR Anchor 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meaning (Vocabulary)

EBRI SC Format

The content of an EBRI SC is typically delivered through a series of facilitator-led meetings scheduled 3-4 weeks apart. There are pre-meeting tasks, and each meeting can vary from 90-120 minutes (for 6 meetings) to up to 3 hours (for 3 meetings).

After conducting a Virtual EBRI SC pilot in spring 2021, I determined that the best format seems to be 6 meetings, scheduled for up to 2 hours (with a break) each, offered over 3-4 months. This gives participants time to process and practice new EBRI practices, ideas, routines, and resources before returning to ask questions or share experiences.

The next three pages describe how to effectively facilitate an EBRI SC consisting of 6 meetings of up to 2 hours in length. All facilitation materials outlined here are found in the [ATLAS EBRI Study Circle Facilitation folder](#); for each meeting, there are:

- [Slide sets](#) addressing all of the meeting topics or questions.
- [Pre-/post-surveys](#), assigned pages in the [EBRI resource](#) companion guide, and reading resources from the [ATLAS Reading resource library](#).
- Participant resources (stored in the [EBRI SC PARTICIPANT MATERIALS folder](#)) and [breakout group tasks](#) (Google docs to be used during meetings).

Facilitators may choose to present the content virtually or in person, with groups of up to 15 participants. **NOTE:** *Meetings One-Two are crucial for understanding EBRI; however, Meetings Three-Six (focused on the four reading components) can be included or excluded according to participants' needs or interests.*

Meeting One Topics: What is EBRI? Where does it come from? What does or might it look like? What are the four reading components? What are their six interrelationships?

Pre-Meeting Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Complete Pre-Meeting One Survey	Updated Syllabus	Reading Component Interrelationship Identification
Gain access to the EBRI resource (print or online)		
Browse ATLAS PD resources		

Meeting Two Topics: What is the value of diagnostic reading assessment (DRA)? What are some inevitable DRA challenges? What public domain tests and forms are available? What are the purposes and processes for testing phonics knowledge, word reading and fluency levels?

Pre-Meeting Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Review pages 9-52 of the EBRI resource	e-DRA Processes & Scoring Guidelines	Word Reading Test Practice
Browse ATLAS DRA resources	Sylvia Greene, Word Reading Test, QUEARA	
	EBRI Student Profile	

Meeting Three Topics: What is the evidence for teaching alphabets? What do alphabets (phonics and multisyllabic decoding) routines look like across levels? What can alphabets routines look like at your level(s)? What print or electronic resources have been recommended by MN STAR/EBRI teachers??

Pre-Meeting Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Read pages 53-64, 95 of the EBRI resource	Alphabets Instruction for Teachers & Volunteers	Alphabets Routine Planning & Sharing
Browse ATLAS Alphabets resources	RF Skills 1-4 MN Combination	
	Instructional Orders	
	Explanation Talking Points	
	Recommended Resources	

Meeting Four Topics: What is the evidence for teaching vocabulary? What do tiered vocabulary routines look like across levels? What can tiered vocabulary levels look like at your level(s)? What print or electronic resources are recommended by MN STAR/EBRI teachers??

Pre-Meeting Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Read pages 68-82, 96 of the EBRI resource	Vocabulary Instruction for Teachers & Volunteers	Vocabulary Routine Planning & Sharing
Browse ATLAS Vocabulary resources	Recommended Resources	

Meeting Five Topics: What does the evidence say about teaching fluency? What do text fluency routines look like across levels? What can fluency routines look like at your level(s)? What print or electronic resources are recommended by MN STAR/EBRI teachers?

Pre-Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Read pages 65-67, 96 of the EBRI resource	BADER Fluency Scripts	Fluency Routine Planning & Sharing
Browse ATLAS Fluency resources	Fluency Techniques	
	Fluency Instruction for Teachers & Volunteers	
	Recommended Resources	

Meeting Six Topics: What does the evidence say about teaching comprehension strategies? What do comprehension strategy routines look like across levels? What can comprehension strategy routines look like at your level(s)? What print or electronic resources are recommended by MN STAR/EBRI teachers?

Pre-Tasks	Participant Resources	Breakout Group Task
Read pages 83-85, 87-90, 97	Comprehension Instruction for Teachers & Volunteers	Comprehension Routine Planning & Sharing
Browse ATLAS Comprehension resources	Recommended Resources	
	Suggested Question Stems & Frames	

EBRI SC Participant and Facilitator Post-Tasks

1. All participants (who attended all to most meetings) complete the Post-Meeting Six survey or evaluation
2. All completers (who attended and participated in all to most meetings) receive a state-approved, CEU form
3. Facilitator(s) review the survey evaluation, note participant progress in knowledge and skills, and consider ratings and comments for continuous improvement of the study circle

SPECIAL NOTE from the study circle developer

One of the favorite features of the Virtual EBRI SC pilot was when STAR- or EBRI-trained teachers shared what their diagnostic reading assessment, alphabets, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension routines looked like. Because the slide contents tend to present “ideal” testing and teaching routines across levels, this practitioner wisdom provided support for and acceptance of what’s “real” (and good enough) during these challenging educational times. It was also the place within each meeting where participants were more inclined to ask questions or add to the chat box. I wish you my best as you begin (or continue) your EBRI adventure!

*Marn Frank
June 2021*

