

Sample STAR Instructional Routines

Nine STAR instructional routines descriptions were collected from experienced MN STAR teachers in small, medium, and large ABE programs. They provide a snapshot of “what STAR looks like” and may offer new or different ideas for scheduling STAR classes and integrating, grouping, and moving STAR students.

SMALL PROGRAMS (serving up to 30 STAR students per year)

West ABE, Buffalo, by Terrisa Fisher

Terrisa’s STAR students are a mix of mostly native and some non-native English speakers. They attend a small STAR class on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. New STAR students are identified at intake, tested in all four components, and integrated about every 3 weeks (or whenever she starts a new vocabulary unit). Her routine is fairly consistent; however, introductory lessons (for new vocabulary words, comprehension strategies, or alphabetic patterns) often take more time. She begins with 40 minutes of vocabulary, followed by 40 minutes of comprehension, 10-15 minutes of alphabetic patterns, and 20 minutes of fluency with two groups. She provides intentional transition to the next class level, an open GED lab, by having her STAR students apply comprehension strategies to pre-GED content materials at GE 4-8.

West ABE, Wayzata, by Cheryl Lubinski

Cheryl’s STAR students are all non-native English speakers. They attend STAR class on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 12:30 to 2:00 PM. New STAR students enter class about once a month and integrate into existing groups and levels. She provides 20 minutes of instruction for each reading component of need. She also offers a language lesson once a week – as needed or requested by students. At the end of STAR class, students work on Skills Tutor, Plato, or online reading sites such as Breaking News English. Those not needing STAR work independently on the same programs or sites. Based on TABE Reading scores and teacher observation, students advance to the next level class, sometimes at a natural break in the program schedule.

MEDIUM PROGRAM (serving 30+ STAR students per year)

Central MN ABE, St. Cloud, by Laurie Leitch

All St. Cloud STAR students are non-native English speakers. One-hour, STAR routines are incorporated into ESL Level 4 and Reading/Writing 1 classes offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM. New students join classes from a waiting list. All students participate in 30 minutes of large group vocabulary and 30 minutes of small group fluency instruction. Alphabetic patterns (focused on learning about syllables, affixes, or roots) is provided during writing time. As needed, volunteers provide phonics instruction and assist with integration into existing groups. Based on teacher monitoring, students move to higher reading groups; based on TABE post-testing, they transition to GED or Adult Diploma classes.

LARGE PROGRAMS (serving 100+ STAR students per year)

Adult Options in Education, Hopkins, by Margaret Genereux

Margaret's STAR students are all non-native English speakers at high intermediate to low advanced ESL levels. They attend STAR class on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, from 12:45 to 2:15 PM. New STAR students enter as soon as possible after completion of CASAS Reading and diagnostic reading assessment. She provides 30 minutes of vocabulary, 30 minutes of alphabetics, and 30 minutes of fluency instruction on both days. Her class is the highest level of STAR for ELLs in Hopkins. Margaret and other Advanced ESL teachers are working more closely with GED preparation teachers to provide a smoother transition for students who desire a GED.

Mankato Adult Education, by LuAnn Sting

LuAnn's STAR students are a combination of native and non-native English speakers. Her STAR class is offered on Mondays through Thursdays, from 1:00 to 2:00 PM. New students join the class quarterly. On Mondays and Wednesdays, she spends 15-20 minutes with each vocabulary, alphabetics, and comprehension group. When she has volunteers on Tuesday and Thursday, she offers two fluency groups and another vocabulary group. For students who do not need a reading group, she has articles from Newsela or ReadWorks for independent reading. Until new students are assessed, they start in the lower groups. Based on teacher monitoring, students move to higher reading groups; based on TABE or CASAS post-testing, they move to a Reading for Content class (see below). She is incorporating CCR Reading Standards by asking 6W questions about and using graphic organizers with text readings.

Mankato Adult Education, by Liv Musel Staloch

Currently, all of Liv's STAR students are non-native English speakers. They attend a 'Reading for Content' class on Mondays through Thursdays, from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM. New students are integrated quarterly. She provides 60 minutes of daily vocabulary instruction that includes academic word modeling, guided practice, and application to text. For all vocabulary readings, she uses graphic organizers to scaffold students into citing evidence, finding main ideas, making inferences, sequencing events, summarizing, paraphrasing, comparing, and contrasting. She finds that using graphic organizers "helps [her] students apply STAR comprehension strategies in a more systematic [and independent] way." Those without vocabulary needs work on projects, diploma completion, or math homework during the hour. When any student scores 236+ or 518+ on CASAS or TABE post-tests, they can move into college prep classes.

Southwest Metro ABE, Chaska, by Heather Hoffer

Heather's STAR students are all non-native English speakers. They attend a combined STAR/GED class on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 5:30 to 8:30 PM. New students join the class from a waiting list. She spends about 20 minutes with each reading component at three levels (Low Intermediate, High Intermediate, and GED). Those not involved in a reading group work independently on TABE books, STAR assignments, or GED materials. Based on teacher monitoring, they move to higher reading groups; based on TABE post-testing, they transition to GED preparation – all within the same class.

Southwest Metro ABE, Shakopee, by Penny Brown

Penny's "Academic Reading" students are a combination of native and non-native English speakers. They attend a combined STAR/GED class on Mondays to Thursdays, from 9:00 to 10:30 AM, 10:45 AM to 12:45 PM, OR on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 5:30 to 8:30 PM. New day students are integrated at the beginning of each month; new evening students join the class from a waiting list. During AM 1, she spends 15 minutes on fluency, alphabetics, vocabulary, and comprehension. During AM 2, she spends 20-25 minutes on comprehension (extended response), vocabulary, and fluency. During her PM class, she focuses on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (extended response). Those not involved in a reading group work on missing or late assignments, visual literacy booklets, or sustained silent reading. She places new students into reading groups using diagnostic reading assessment and they move up based on teacher monitoring. Her classes are the highest level in the program; therefore, students remain until they pass all five GED tests, take an Accuplacer test, or gain employment.

Minneapolis Adult Education, South Campus, by Heather Turngren

Heather's STAR students are all non-native English speakers at TABE Reading GLE 5.0-7.5. New students are assessed prior to class entry and integrated into reading groups at the beginning or middle of program quarters. During her Monday to Thursday evening STAR classes, all students receive 15 minutes of vocabulary every day, 25 minutes of fluency on Monday (when volunteers are available), and 25 minutes of comprehension on Tuesday. Most do not have alphabetics needs; however, she does review syllables, roots, and affixes for the week's vocabulary words. Students move to the next level reading class based on benchmark assessments, TABE Reading scores, class work, online readings and assessments, and progress in STAR fluency and comprehension groups. A few students have asked to be moved, and Heather works that out on a one-to-one basis.