

# NEWSLINKS

## A curriculum for using newspapers in the adult ESL classroom

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Colorado Department of Education  
201 East Colfax Ave.  
Denver, CO 80203

Denver Newspaper Agency  
1560 Broadway St.  
Denver, CO 80202

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Adult Education and Family Literacy  
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For information contact:

**Denver Newspaper Agency**  
Post-News Educational Services  
1560 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: (303) 820-1335  
Fax: (303) 820-1054  
[nie@denvernewspaperagency.com](mailto:nie@denvernewspaperagency.com)

Design by: Design Group, Denver Newspaper Agency

*From a member of the curriculum writing team:*

Dear Teachers,

I want to share this story with you as you start using newspapers with your adult ESL learners:

My family came to the United States from Mexico when I was 6. My mother, Carmen Rojo Doran, who was 37 spoke almost no English when we arrived in El Paso. My dad, who was from Colorado, was an avid reader, so the first thing he did after we were settled was to subscribe to the EL PASO TIMES which he read every morning before he went to work. I noticed that while my siblings and I were getting ready for school my mom would sit down at the kitchen table where she laboriously read the front page, word by word. Soon she was reading more pages in the newspaper and asking my brother and me what this or that word meant. Later she enrolled in ESL classes but the newspaper was the core of her learning English, and reading it was a life-long pursuit. My mom became a citizen and one year later, after my dad died, she began a career with a major American company. Over the years she bought her own home and educated her three children, seeing us through college. Every day of her adult life, until she was disabled by a stroke at age 90, Mom read the newspaper. For the last 10 years it was THE DENVER POST. I share this with you because as I've been writing these activities I've had my mother in mind. This project is VERY important and perhaps it's been fitting that I've been involved in it.

I hope that your students' experiences using the newspaper in your classroom will be as meaningful to them as reading the newspaper at the kitchen table was to my mother.

Pat



# FOREWORD

The idea for designing a curriculum guide for teachers interested in using newspapers with adult ESL learners began in the summer of 2003 when the manager of the Denver Newspaper Agency's (DNA) Educational Services department approached the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Center for At-Risk Education. Since promoting literacy is a goal of both adult educators and newspaper publishers, the idea soon became a partnership between these two entities. Over the course of the next year a team comprising adult ESL practitioners, CDE consultants, and DNA managers devised the overall plan of the curriculum guide, designed the template for the classroom activities, wrote, field tested and revised the activities, and published the guide. It was a fun and challenging task for everyone involved with the project.

This curriculum guide distinguishes itself in many ways from newspaper activities that can be found in other ESL textbooks or on the internet. The special features of our guide are:

- **Activities are organized by life skill topics** - The 111 classroom activities are organized according to six life skill competency areas typically taught in adult ESL programs plus three general topics. The life skill topics are: Consumer Economics, Employment, Community Services, Health, Housing, and Transportation. The three general topics are: Using Newspapers, Just Language, and Potpourri.
- **Ready-made activities** - All activities include clear, step-by-step teacher instructions and materials lists. Where appropriate, activities have ready-made reproducible student worksheets so a busy teacher can just grab-and-go.
- **Student Performance Levels (SPL) are indicated for each activity** - SPLs are indicated to guide teachers in matching an activity to the proficiency level of learners. Teachers will find lots of newspaper activities appropriate for ESL learners from beginners to advanced. The curriculum guide includes an index of activities by SPLs for quick reference.
- **CASAS competencies are indicated** - When a newspaper activity addresses a CASAS competency, the competency number is listed on the teacher's instruction page. The curriculum guide includes an index of activities by CASAS competency numbers for quick reference.
- **Take-home tasks are described for all in-class activities** - Teachers won't need to think of homework ideas; each activity has a suggested at-home extension for adult ESL learners.
- **Intergenerational literacy activities are provided** - Each activity comes with ideas for newspaper activities that adult learners can do at home with their children ages 2-10.
- **Activities were written and field tested by active ESL practitioners** - ESL classroom teachers in four Colorado AEFLA programs wrote the activity instructions and tested each activity with learners in their classrooms.

Our sincere thanks go to the nine teachers who worked for almost a year as curriculum developers to bring this project to fruition. In addition, we want to express our appreciation to the directors of the adult education programs for giving the teachers release time to write activities and attend our working meetings, and for allowing the teachers to field test the activities with ESL learners in their classrooms.

Sincerely,

Jane C. Miller  
ESL Specialist  
Colorado Department of Education  
Center for At-Risk Education  
Adult Education and Family Literacy

Dana Plewka  
Post-News Educational Service Manager  
Denver Newspaper Agency

Douglas Glynn  
Workforce/Workplace Education Consultant  
Colorado Department of Education  
Center for At-Risk Education  
Adult Education and Family Literacy

Karen Carr  
State Coordinator  
Migrant Education Even Start  
Colorado Department of Education  
Center for At-Risk Education

Pamela M. Smith  
State Director  
Adult Education and Family Literacy  
Colorado Department of Education  
Center for At-Risk Education

The following Adult Education and Family Literacy providers participated in this curriculum guide project.

**Adult Education Center of Durango**

Director: Paulette Church  
Teacher/Curriculum Developer:  
Maggie Bowes

**Learning Source for Adults and Families**

Director: Susan Lythgoe  
Teachers/Curriculum Developers:  
Christine Deines  
Patricia Kennedy

**Morgan Community College - ABLE**

Director: Julie Waters  
Teachers/Curriculum Developers:  
Rebecca Crosthwait  
Ann Iungerich  
Pam Hernandez  
Rose Merchant

**Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning**

Director: Barbara Sample  
Teachers/Curriculum Developers  
Janice Hampton  
Maire Minnis

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**ACTIVITY****OBJECTIVE****PAGE NO.****UNIT 8 - HOUSING**

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Index:	SPL (Student Performance Level)
Index:	CASAS Competencies

**A** → **ACTIVITY: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW**

**E** → **Competency Area:**  
Just Language

**F** → **Objective:**  
Students read a newspaper article and find the answers to: who, what, when, why, where and how questions.

**G** → **Newspaper section:**  
Front page, local news,

**H** → **Required Class Time:**  
30 minutes

**I** → **Target Vocabulary:**  
who, what, when where, why, how

**J** → **Grammar points:**  
None

**K** → **Materials List:**  
Newspapers, worksheet

- L** → **In-Class Procedure**
- Warm up:** Write the target vocabulary that all newspaper articles try to answer. Example: WHO - Bob Jones, WHAT - Explain that often the answers can be found in the article.
  - Hand out newspapers and worksheets and headlines.
  - After reading the article the learner finds the answers to who, what, when, how.
  - Learners share their results with another learner after reading each others' articles.

**B** → **SPL Level:**  
4-6, 6+

**C** → **Language Skills:**  
R L S

**D** → **CASAS**  
none

USING THE NEWSPAPER

**M** → **TAKE-HOME ACTIVITIES:**

**For adult learner:**  
The worksheet can be taken home and the learner writes a complete summary paragraph using the information collected from the article.

**For learner and child(ren) :**  
**Ages 2-5:** Have adults read a simple picture book with their children. Help the children answer the questions who, what, where, and when. Why questions are very difficult at this ages.

**Grades 1-4:** Help the child choose a picture from the paper. Have them create their own story to answer the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions from the picture.

**Tips and Options:**  
For a lower group the same activity can be used without having to use complete sentences when addressing the target vocabulary.

USING THE NEWSPAPER

## USING THE TEACHER INSTRUCTION PAGES IN THE NEWSLINKS CURRICULUM GUIDE.

<b>A</b>	Activity	The title of the activity.
<b>B</b>	SPL Level	Student Performance Level appropriate for the classroom activity as it is written. Teachers may adapt the activity to suit learners of higher or lower language proficiencies.
<b>C</b>	Language Skills	Language skills practiced during the in-class activity. R = Reading, W = Writing, L = Listening, S = Speaking
<b>D</b>	CASAS	Life skill competencies from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System which are inherently addressed during the activity.
<b>E</b>	Competency Area	The life skill category addressed by the activity. Also, the name of the chapter in the curriculum guide in which the activity is included.
<b>F</b>	Objective	A description of the task the learners will complete during the activity.
<b>G</b>	Newspaper Section	The section(s) of the newspaper used for the activity.
<b>H</b>	Required Class Time	An estimate of the time required to complete the in-class activity.
<b>I</b>	Target Vocabulary	A selection of key vocabulary used during the activity. Teachers may select additional vocabulary suited to their students' needs and/or arising from the specific news articles used during the activity.
<b>J</b>	Grammar Points	Grammar points that typically are addressed during the activity. Specific news articles selected for use during the activity may demonstrate additional grammar points.
<b>K</b>	Materials List	Specific materials needed for the activity. Standard classroom materials (markers, erasers) are assumed and not listed.
<b>L</b>	In-class Procedure	Step-by-step teacher instructions. Teachers may adapt the instructions to suit their classroom contexts and students' needs. For activities that use a worksheet, the reproducible worksheet follows the teacher instruction page.
<b>M</b>	Take-Home Activities	For adult learner: Suggestions for activities related to the in-class activity that can be done at home. For learner and child(ren): Suggestions for intergenerational activities related to the in-class activity that can be done at home with the adult learner and child together.
<b>N</b>	Tips and Options	Tips for the teacher regarding managing the in-class activity. Options for extending the activity to suit learners of higher or lower proficiencies, for adding additional language components (adding role play to a reading activity, for example), for alternative classroom arrangements, etc.



## WHY USE THE NEWSPAPER?

1. Newspapers make learning fun.
2. Newspapers are easy to use.
3. Newspapers are extremely flexible and adaptable to all curriculum areas and proficiency levels.
4. Newspapers motivate students to read.
5. Newspapers keep students informed.
6. Newspapers link students to the real world.
7. Newspapers are a common community link -a community talking to itself.
8. Newspapers are an excellent language learning tool with high status as an adult medium.
9. Newspapers help students understand freedom of the press and other rights guaranteed in the Constitution.
10. Newspapers are ideal for building many educational skills such as locating information, identifying the main idea of a paragraph, developing better critical thinking skills, understanding cause and effect, recognizing important details, determining accuracy, proof reading, anticipating outcomes, and improving skimming, scanning and surveying skills.
11. Newspapers build good reading habits.
12. Newspapers can be cut, marked, clipped, pasted, filed.
13. Newspapers give everybody something interesting to read.
14. Newspapers entertain as they teach.
15. Newspapers are a cost effective way to educate.

\*Prepared by The Ohio Newspaper in Education Committee, 1980



