

Health Literacy: Annotated Instructional Resources and References



Instructional Resources

One focus of the Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) in Adult Education project is identifying high-quality, evidence-based materials and training to support teachers in integrating transferable skills development in the areas of civics education, digital literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, and workforce preparation skills into adult education and literacy instruction. The following selection of easy-to-use instructional resources have been recommended by subject matter experts in health literacy for teaching the skills that matter. Please note that these only are intended as a starting point to support teachers' important work in this area and exploration of existing instructional resources.

Bell Foundation, Learning & Work Institute, & De Montfort University. (2019). *Improving language, improving lives: Resources for ESOL tutors* (pp. 112–161). Retrieved from LearnerWeb: <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/research-report/esol-tutor-resource-pack/>

Although U.S. educators may be unfamiliar with some of the British context and terminology in this tutor resource pack, this resource provides a range of materials related to health literacy. The resources address topics such as self-care, stress management, first aid, and eating well. The activities for each topic offer multifaceted opportunities for building health literacy skills, including system navigations (i.e., how to access services) and self-awareness (i.e., being able to articulate why advice from others is valuable). The materials enable learners to develop language for talking about their health, so they are better poised to communicate their healthcare needs and decisions to others. This resource includes activities to prompt thinking about the various contexts in which healthcare decisions are made, encouraging students to think of health literacy as more than conventional “survival skills.” The materials are written with intermediate language learners in mind, but tips are given for scaling up and down to reach beginning and advanced learners as well.

Florida Literacy Coalition. (2014). *Staying healthy: An English learner's guide to health care and healthy living*. Retrieved from https://floridaliteracy.org/health_literacy_curriculum.html

This website provides materials for teachers who work in diverse programs and with diverse learner populations to integrate health literacy topics in their instruction. Teachers can use individual activities or units within the curriculum. The activities or units can be used alone, or teachers can work through an entire book. Although this resource was developed by the Florida Literacy Council, the content of the materials is not state specific. These materials are not specifically designed for learners with low levels of literacy, but some activities can support literacy skill development (e.g., sight-

word recognition). With sufficient scaffolding, many components of this resource can be used successfully with lower levels.

Minnesota Literacy Council. (n.d.). Beginning ESL—Transitions skills. Retrieved from <https://mnliteracy.org/tools/curriculum-lesson-plans/beginning-esl-transitions-skills>

This resource provides teachers with materials targeted to beginning and pre-beginning ESL learners. Less experienced literacy teachers may feel emboldened to use these resources to jump-start a health literacy unit with low literacy-level learners. The health materials encourage teachers to invite speakers from local support agencies. No health literacy expertise is required. The objectives of the beginning and pre-beginning ESL units align with the TSTM skills. They also reflect important views on health literacy (functional, interactive, and critical).

Singleton, K. (2003a). Picture stories for adult ESL health literacy. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/Health/

These materials present stories that feature dilemmas that adult learners can relate to, often with no clear resolution, inviting learners to problem-solve, share their problem-solving resources, and practice critical health literacy skills with guidance from teachers. The stories can be used to engage beginning-level ESL students in critical dialogue about topics such as mental health and health insurance. The flexible components of this resource (picture stories, Language Experience Approach, etc.) can also be used with higher level proficiency learners.

Singleton, K. (2003b). *Virginia Adult ESOL Health Literacy Toolkit*. Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. Retrieved from <https://valrc.org/toolkit/index.html>

This resource gives teachers an overview of health issues and addresses the nature of health literacy instruction and its pedagogical foundation. The toolkit includes many curricular resources that were written with practitioners in mind across language and literacy proficiency levels, and it was designed with ESL students in mind. The overview documents can be used to guide discussions among teachers. The toolkit includes tips for making material accessible to lower level ESL students.

Soricone, L., Rudd, R., Santos, M., & Capistrant, B. (2007). *Health literacy in adult basic education: Designing lessons, units, and evaluation plans for an integrated curriculum*. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and Health and Adult Literacy and Learning Initiative. Retrieved from <https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/135/2012/09/healthliteracyinadulthoodeducation.pdf>

This resource supports teachers in planning curricular units and lessons on health literacy. It also explains how to structure a professional development study circle around this topic. This work is suitable for adult educators of students across all levels of proficiency.



Additional References

The following is a selection of additional resources recommended by subject matter experts in health literacy for adult educators to learn more about the topic area addressed in the *Teaching Skills That Matter* project. Please note that these only are intended as a starting point to support teachers' important work in this area and exploration of existing references resources.

Atkinson, R., Frazier, C., & Atkinson, T. (2009). *What to Do for Health books and teacher training manual*. La Habra, CA: Institute for Healthcare Advancement. Retrieved from <http://www.iha4health.org/our-products/> AND <https://www.iha4health.org/our-products/free-materials/>

This series of books provides an overview of high-frequency, high-interest health topics. The books are akin to an easy-reader encyclopedia, so they can be used as reading texts or a reference for the teacher in creating original lessons. Learners can be encouraged to refer to these materials as they come across new topics they would like to explore.

Bennett, I., Feinberg, I., Hohn, M., Kersten, E., Rosen, D., & Santos, M. (2017, April). *Why healthy communities need adult basic skills education*. Open Door Collective. Retrieved from <http://www.opendoorcollective.org/why-healthy-communities-need-adult-basic-skills-education.html>

This set of papers gives teachers a “big picture” view of why health literacy matters in adult education but also why adult educators play a key role in helping students to develop health literacy competencies.

Mooney, A., & Prins, E. (2013, May). Addressing the health literacy needs of adult education students. Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy. Retrieved from <https://ed.psu.edu/goodling-institute/professional-development/pracitioner-guide-4>

Although family literacy is the focus, this article is relevant to teachers working in other instructional areas. It provides an overview of the role that adult educators play in advancing health literacy. The article includes many familiar concepts related to learner-centered, contextualized learning while providing teachers with new health literacy avenues they can use in their teaching.

Papen, U. (2008). Literacy, learning, and health—A social practices view of health literacy. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*. Retrieved from <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/lnj/article/view/1275>

This article explores the implications to society of health literacy as a social practice and as a shared resource.

Santos, M., Handley, M., Omark, K., & Schillinger, D. (2014). ESL participation as a mechanism for advancing health literacy in immigrant communities. *Journal of Health*



Communication, 19(Suppl 2), 89–105. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266945640_ESL_Participation_as_a_Mechanism_for_Advancing_Health_Literacy_in_Immigrant_Communities

This article gives readers a working set of concepts to talk about the ways the field thinks about health literacy and its integration into adult education, making it a strong starting point for discussion while helping teachers make connections to their classroom contexts as they read. The article focuses on Type 2 diabetes prevention, but the principles and insights can be applied to other health domains. This article will be less relevant to teachers who teach Adult Basic Education learners. In addition, it may be too advanced for teachers who are new to the health literacy field.

Soricone, L., Rudd, R., Santos, M., & Capistrant, B. (2007). Health literacy in adult basic education: Designing lessons, units, and evaluation plans for an integrated curriculum. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and Health and Adult Literacy and Learning Initiative. Retrieved from <https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/135/2012/09/healthliteracyinadulthoodeducation.pdf>

This resource offers guidance on structuring professional development around the health literacy planning process.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (n.d.). *Quick guide to health literacy*.

This resource provides an overview of health literacy for teachers. It can be especially useful for adult educators who seek to partner with a public health organization and want to be well informed before entering conversations with potential partners.

The Teaching Skills That Matter in Adult Education project is managed by the American Institutes for Research under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (Contract Number GS-10F-0112J). These materials are examples of resources that may be available. Inclusion of this information does not constitute an official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any products or services offered or views expressed. The hyperlinks and URLs provided in this document were created and are maintained by outside organizations. The Department is not responsible for the accuracy of this information. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred. September 2019.

