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ABC's of ESA

Increase literacy in your community with this program.

The ABC's of ESA is a proposed literacy program to provide ESA members with a hands-on program to create enthusiasm for reading and to enhance the reading skills of both children and adults. The program is intended to encourage various levels of participation, and is designed to suit the interests of both individual members and chapters. In addition, the program strives to provide ideas for making reading instruction and skills available to individuals of all ages.

This program booklet is developed to provide materials to interest your chapter in the project by indicating the need that people have to read. In addition, short sections outlining ideas for individual and chapter participation at the A, B, C and D levels of participation are included for your review.

Members are encouraged to use this brief listing of ideas to enhance their personal and chapter activities. In addition, ESA Headquarters requests that you send in reports of your activities along with ideas, additional resources, or suggestions that you want to share for future program development.

Proposed levels of participation

Level A

This level is designed to encourage children to be interested in reading and the written word. This means that, in addition to being fun, reading stories to children is very important to the future development of language skills.

At level A of the ABC's program members arrange to read to children. Whether they arrange this as a chapter or individual project, participation counts if the person reads to kids or reads with children who are learning to read. The member or chapter can decide the situation where the reading takes place. This is the level of participation where we also encourage those who read or assist adults who cannot read. Reading to the blind or recording books, articles, etc. for reading impaired individuals also counts.

Level B

At this level chapters or individuals develop larger scale or ongoing reading programs with a school (Adopt a School), hospital, nursing home, library, etc. At this level, people commit more time and energy to the program to reach more people.

Level C

At this level chapters or members actually train to become literacy tutors through an authorized literacy program. To get credit at this level, training has to be completed and literacy tutoring has to be conducted by the participants.

Level D

At this level the individual or chapter sponsors a literacy clinic and works to develop staff and ongoing site for literacy training. This is the level where the chapter or individual can sponsor an I Can't Read Anonymous clearinghouse and support center in their community.

ABC's Level A

Even the youngest children love sounds. They listen for the voices of their parents, and in time, learn that the sounds form words which can help them to communicate their feelings and needs to those around them.

When children begin to read, they begin the process of recognizing the written symbols that others have created to represent the sounds that form words. Eventually, they learn to organize symbols in ways that create the written word.

Reading, the art of recognizing and processing the written word, ordinarily does not take place without instruction. The learner generally needs additional support and extra practice sessions to acquire mastery of essential techniques that result in comprehension and communication.

You and your chapter are encouraged to create ideas and support reading activities for people of all ages.

Places to work on level A activities

- Many level A activities are designed to assist individuals in creating readiness for children as they begin to be exposed to the reading process. The ideas here were created to make the idea of reading attractive and fun for the beginning learner. Since learning often is directly related to the receptivity of the learner, these ideas are suggested to help children want to learn more.
- This section also provides resources for those members who might be interested in assisting those who are not able to read as a result of physical limitations.
- Some counseling activities are also included for adults who cannot read, but who need to know basic skills for every day survival.

Ideas for Reading with Children

Choose a child or a group of children to read to and with. Consult with teachers or libraries regarding things that children of this age level like to read. Then ask which reading materials are the most fun and set aside a time to let the reading begin.

You can read at your home, the child's home, a school classroom, the children's wing of the hospital, day care centers, churches, the library, etc. Where you read is not important; however, the site may provide access to more than one child.

You can gain recommendations for current reading selections from friends with small children, the children you know, librarians, school teachers, etc. Find books that you like and that you will read with enthusiasm. For young children find books that focus on activities such as identification of letters, objects, scratch and sniff stories, touching books, or stories that have push and pull levers to manipulate the characters. Keep in mind that both the reader and the listener should participate in the story. Even when you read stories that have no participation devices built in ask the child what he/she thinks. If the child is learning to read, ask them to identify words or letters or better yet, get them to exchange the reading role with you wherever they can

Remember, reading time is a special time that you have to boost the child's ego. Compliment them, tell them that you're having a good time, and provide the special support that suggests that they are smart and fun to be with. Your activity can help to create the confidence that will provide the positive self-image that is so important to overcome the risks that are involved in making the mistakes that are necessary for learning.

Some authors to consider

Dr. Seuss is popular because his books have good messages and they are fun to read. If you simply remember his name, you'll be able to locate many stories at your public library.

Richard Scary, Mercer Mayer, and the Bernstein's also provide a number of humorous stories that involve characters to engage young readers.

Classics, like *Charlotte's Web* and other E. B. White stories are good for reading times that involve more than one session. These are good chapter reading stories for before bedtime, and encourage the reading of longer works over a period of time. (*Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame is another good selection along with other favorites like *Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne.)

Poetry is another great option to read to children. While this doesn't always seem to be what kids are thinking about, there are a number of funny, short poems that will keep the interest in words, sounds, and language. Shel Silverstein has created a youthful cult of admirers with his books such as *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *A Light in the Attic*. A couple of samples of his poetry are included. Read them aloud and delight the child you're reading to. Encourage the child to learn a poem, even a very short one, and see the pride and confidence that you will have created.

Other fun activities

- Take children to the library and let them make their own reading selections.
- Help young kids to make their own books. Have them find pictures of things that they like, and create an alphabet book using items that the child likes. Also write down a letter of the

alphabet and let the child decorate the essential shape using colors, faces, etc. that he/she likes. Work with these letter pictures as though they were flash cards.

- Watch educational kid shows like *Blue's Clues*, *Barney*, etc. with small children and have the child make up a story about the character after the show. Write the story down for the child, and then have the child illustrate his/her story. Read the story back to the child or have him/her tell you the story using the pictures.
- Ask your child to tell you the words he or she would like to use in a story. Find the pictures, put them together, and have the child tell the story while you write it down. Again, help them to create their own book. Work together to make a terrific cover, put their name on it as author, and have them share the story book with someone else who is special to them.
- Make word picture drawings with kids and tell the story in pictures.
- Make a split story book: Put together two flip notebooks of any size. On one side write a subject and verb, i.e. Billy is. Then create different stories by using different subject/verb pages with descriptions of their qualities. All types of things will work using the two notebooks.

You can also create an ego builder book about the child. Use the child's name, and then use the second notebook to list all the things you like about him/her.

NOTEBOOK ONE:

Billy

NOTEBOOK TWO:

is a fast runner.

has a good sense of humor.

You can further adapt this exercise to work on words that rhyme.

Note: A great thing about this exercise is that you can work on it in waiting situations such as restaurants, at the doctor's office, or riding in the car. It's a take-a-long treat for both you and the child. As usual, you may let the child create the art work to go along with the story.

Reading activities for adults with physical limitations

- Schedule time to read to patients who are in the hospital or in nursing homes. Ask the patient what they might like you to read. For the first session, be prepared with newspapers, a magazine article or two, and a book that you think they might like. If possible do some research in advance, and get ideas from nurses, family members, etc.
- Contact your local library to learn how you can create Talking Books, either through established literacy groups in your area or through the nearest regional office. Don't forget to talk to your local museum too. Sometimes these groups sponsor Talking Books to meet the special local interest of the community's citizens.

- Contact local Meals on Wheels' groups to see if people on their delivery route would like a reading visit in their homes. Again, a little advance work will help you to bring things that they enjoy. In this setting, you can often ask if they would like you to read from something they already have on hand.
- Record a Story: Have elderly people tell you about the good old days, and record their stories as they are talking. Have prepared questions. Record the answers and share the answers with younger people. This is a good way to make the older person realize how important their life is and also gives the younger people a means to understand history through a living person. The museum might be interested in your records for its living history section.

Counseling for adults who need reading survival skills

- Consult your local library to inquire about the Read Up portion of the library. This section involves simplified reading materials that can be used to help create basic survival skills. Individuals can act as tutors or can circulate the materials that are available through the library to other agencies that employ or serve adults with literacy problems.
- Volunteer at teen pregnancy centers, battered women's shelters, etc. to individually go through labels, coupons, etc. to assist illiterate women in transition with their shopping and other daily activities. You can also assist them with reading employment notices or important letters and documents that they might have received. Then assist in getting them enrolled in an adult literacy program.
- Note: Elsa Woods and Beverly Lancaster have written two very good books: *Reading for Survival in Today's Society*, Volumes I and II which can assist you in helping individuals work with basic symbols, words, and tasks.

Here are a couple of examples of terms to teach adults for reading survival:

- Coupon – a form that provides a savings.
- Redeem – to turn in and receive something back.
- Expired – no longer good.
- Processed – not in a natural state, but prepared or changed.
- Artificial – not real.
- Dehydrated – liquid removed.
- Condensed – having the water removed; reduced to a thicker consistency.
- Ingredients – contents.
- Submit – to give in; to give to.
- Valid – good; not expired.
- Redemption – the process of turning in production information that is required by the manufacturer in order to get a refund, rebate, or special allowance.
- Applicable – applies.

ABC's Level B

This part of ESA's ABC's program incorporates all of the activities that are recommended in Part A; however, completion of this part requires that you design and implement a longer term program of reading enhancement. This can be as simple as reading to an individual or group of individuals on a regular basis. (You can keep a log to keep track of activities, response, changes, etc.) It can also be a mix and match program where you do the children part one month, the adult the next, etc. However, the plan must have some kind of continuity and a longer lasting goal. If possible, this level should also assist you in reaching a larger number of people to assist you in making a larger literacy difference.

Activities

- Expand on any or all of the activities listed in Level A. Again, keep a literacy log to develop the ideas and techniques that were most effective. Maintain a prescribed level of work for at least a three-month period of time during the year. (If possible, the months should be sequential. That will help you to see the difference you're making.)
- Establish an ongoing relationship with a school, hospital, helping agency, etc. Try to share your special care with many of the individuals who frequent the place that you have chosen. Establish yourself or your chapter as literacy links with the community as a whole.
- Organize a reading day or reading week and get important members of the community to come to your group and read a favorite story or poem (or supply them with one that is appropriate to the age group they'll be reading to). Take the initiative for organizing such an event. Involve the mayor, high school athletes, local disc jockeys, the fire chief, etc. to set the examples for the kids in the classroom.
- Organize reading Olympics programs for day care and school children. If you want to form teams, have prominent members of the community come to the place, meet their team members, and tell them how reading has been important to them. For kids who qualify by reading for the Olympics, have competitive story telling events, prizes, and a pizza party sponsored by the team captain.

ABC's Level C

Level C requires official training for the individuals who plan to get involved as certified literacy tutors. This program can be completed individually or as a chapter group; however, the training program should be one that has widespread approval from reading experts. Consult ESA Headquarters if you need the names of programs that are available or submit the names of local training programs that have approval in your geographic area.

For any member who provides proof that they have completed this type of literacy training, ESA will provide a certificate of merit and will also automatically award 6th Degree credit in the area of education for those who have completed the 5th Degree/Pallas Athene.

If you are looking for a starting point, contact your local librarian or a reading expert through your local school district.

ESA has received materials and instruction books for the Laubach Literacy Training Program and approves the program to meet all the requirements for the level C of our ESA program.

Please contact ESA Headquarters to suggest alternative training programs or to gain additional program information.

ABC's Level D

Participation in this level of the ABC's program requires pre-approval from ESA Headquarters. This level requires a plan for developing an on-going reading facility such as the ADAPT Clinic. Please note that the ADAPT Clinic involves the development of staff and substantial financial resources. If you are interested in pursuing this level of activity, you should have completed all of the other levels of the program before you embark on this one. Note the attached information regarding the ADAPT Clinic and contact ESA Headquarters for more information.

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ABC's of ESA Report Form

Name: _____
Chapter Name: _____ **Chapter Number:** _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____
E-mail: _____

What: I did my chapter did we all did (check one)

Description of activities (please send photo whenever possible): _____

Attach additional sheets, articles, etc. if necessary and return to ESA Headquarters at the address above.

Using the right method for the right child

Flug, splid, splad. The words are uttered by a small beam-creature as he looks up trustingly for approval.

Is this E.T. struggling to learn English? No, it is my son learning to read.

In spite of our space age technology, our increasing reliance on the use of computers and the worldwide impact of radio and television, one old-fashioned skill is still the cornerstone of our educational system: reading. If Johnny and Jenna acquire these basic skills on schedule, all is very likely to go well for them in their school careers. If they flounder, they are likely to find themselves awash in a sea of frustrations leading to an inability to keep up in other subjects, poor self-image, and often times increasingly belligerent or withdrawn behavior.

Not a happy picture. It is particularly poignant when the child seems bright but can't "catch on" to reading in spite of the best efforts of dedicated teachers and concerned parents.

Thus it is well worth noting when a reading method results in significant progress for children who have had difficulty in learning to read. In Fort Collins, one such method is called ADD (Auditory Discrimination in Depth) Program. It has enabled some junior and senior high students to advance three grade levels in reading skills in four months. Persons aged six to 60 have benefited from the program thus far. Spelling skills are strengthened significantly.

ADD is success oriented, meeting the child where he is and taking him from there. Tactile, visual and auditory senses are involved as much as possible.

Sponsored by ESA, the program is run as a private nonprofit clinic called the ADAPT Clinic. Kay Starke, the teacher who has directed the clinic for the past two years, became enthusiastic after searching for a way to help her fourth child overcome a learning disability. Kay, who is not known for doing things half way, was so impressed with the program's ability to help her child that she enrolled two other of her children for their own enrichment and later became director.

Now back to Flug, Splid and Splad. Certain foundational skills enable a child to learn to read by any method. The ability to monitor sounds is one foundational skill. In order to read easily a person must be able to monitor (hear) the number and order of sounds in a spoken pattern.

ADD works to develop this ability by using nonsense words and colored blocks to represent each sound. Thus, ug could be shown by using a yellow red block. Two different sounds, two different blocks. Fug would require a third different colored block place in front, and gug would require a red, yellow red combination. In brief, the child next learns to read and spell nonsense words and then moves on to read words, learning work attack skills in great detail. The child can then benefit more fully from reading classes in his regular classroom.

What has been the reaction of the public schools to this program? It speaks well for Poudre R-1 that its response has been supportive of students in the private program and receptive to integrating the teaching method into its schools. A group of 30 teachers have been trained in the method and some will be using it this year. Kay Stark has been hired as a reading teacher by the district, leaving the ADAPT Clinic to be run by Gladys Johnston and Marietta Bliss, both of whom have worked extensively with ADD.

As a former teacher I believe that there are at least two ingredients necessary for teaching reading to children already having difficulty: the right method for the particular child and the ability to motivate the child. ADD seems to provide the right method for a significant number of these children and tutors who work with the children provide the essential second ingredient.

It is good to live in a community which strives to provide these two ingredients both through the schools and through private means.

Reflections from Shel Silverstein

My beard

My beard grows to my toes,
I never wears no clothes,
I wraps my hair
Around my bare,
And down the road I goes.

Messy Room

Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
His underwear is hanging on the lamp.
His raincoat is there in the overstuffed chair,
And the chair is becoming quite mucky and damp.
His workbook is wedged in the window,
His sweater's been thrown on the floor.
His scarf and one ski are beneath the TV.
And his pants have been carelessly hung on the door.
His books are all jammed in the closet,
His vest has been left in the hall.
A lizard named Ed is asleep in his bed,
And his smelly old sock has been stuck to the wall.
Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
Donald or Robert or Willie or –
Huh? You say it's mine? Oh dear,
I *knew* it looked familiar!

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The Need to Read

Share this information with others to heighten awareness
and to spark interest in the ABC's program.

Facts

- It is estimated that one out of every three Americans has some reading deficiency.
- It is estimated that at least 25 million Americans cannot read and understand such common communications as poison labels, letters from teachers, or headlines from a daily newspaper.

Impact

- Only 4 percent of those at the highest reading levels live in poverty.
- 43 percent of those in the lowest reading levels live in poverty.

While illiteracy most often is not an indicator of intelligence, people with reading disorders and those who suffer from illiteracy often feel less intelligent than their peers. Their self-image is often adversely affected, and they often fail to strive to reach their full potential. Adolescent and adult illiterates often fear the discovery of their reading problems, and actively work to hide the discovery of their illiteracy.

Read the following articles to note the personal impact that reading had on one family.

“I wish I could read and write”

By: Bonnie Remsberg

Mary Chap Grigar grew up in Chicago, (where she still lives), the second of eight children. She was a wildly active child, perpetually on the move. Her father remembers that she also had frequent tantrums, cried easily and sometimes fainted. Her behavior was attributed to a hot temper but, looking back, Mary thinks it was frustration.

When her older brother entered parochial school, he would proudly read to his little sister from his first primers. Mary memorized the words that went with the pictures, and when she entered school she was a whiz at reading. Her first-grade teacher thought she was a genius. But the next year, when her class moved on to unfamiliar primers, Mary's troubles began.

She found it impossible to distinguish among many letters in the alphabet. Her parents tried to help her by papering the walls of her room with an alphabet pattern, but even though she memorized the names of the animals holding the letters, she couldn't consistently tell one from another.

By the time she was in third grade, the motherly nuns who had been her first teachers gave way to a parade of stern disciplinarians. Over and over they would tell her: “You're not concentrating. You're not trying. You're lazy.” It was a short jump to the statement that Mary soon heard echoing in her mind, “*You're a dummy.*” Before long this sensitive child sank into an ocean of failure and depression.

By fourth grade she was acting up in class – confused, resentful, miserable. “I was moved to the back of the room so I wouldn't disturb anyone else. I'd come home every night and cry.” Fifth grade was worse. “I couldn't memorize my religious lessons because I couldn't read them. The teacher kept me after school every day for five weeks.”

In sixth grade punishment for misspelling a word was to write it 50 times a night. Each day Mary would misspell 25 to 50 words; each night she would spend long hours trying to write them correctly, with no idea what she was spelling. *Go* became *do*, *must* became *much*. When forced to stand up and read aloud in class, she got so flustered that she wet her pants.

Meanwhile, her social problems were becoming as acute as her academic ones. The other children would tease her and make her the butt of cruel jokes. Mary's response was to burst into tears.

She began overeating, and the fatter she got, the worse she felt. She was spinning in a vicious circle. She couldn't figure out why she wasn't able to read like other kids.

Her baffled parents urged her to try harder. But they were always kind; her teachers were not.

Mary remembers one teacher who took her into the hall each day. “She would grab me by the arms and dig in her nails and shake me. ‘You're nothing but a crybaby,’ she would say. ‘How do you expect to learn if you don't try?’”

Fit of Despair. Mary's salvation was the Girl Scouts. There she could achieve. Once when the troop was planning a production of *Little Women*, the leader asked Mary if she would play the part of Beth, the sickly sister. Crying, Mary confessed that she couldn't read.

To Mary's joy, the woman displayed no shock. Calmly, she said, "I'll read the play to you and can memorize it." She did, and Mary was great.

But school continued to be a nightmare. Mary lost things because she couldn't form a mental picture of where she had put them. She couldn't do her homework because she couldn't write out assignments or remember them. "I began to believe I was crazy," she says. Her teachers gave up trying to teach her.

Mary's defense was to become the class clown, turning everything into a joke before it could be turned against her. Others saw her as funny and raucous. But inside she was still a sad, lonely little girl, hurting badly. Pictures of her at age 14 show her looking 30, fat and very troubled.

Her parents continued to be supportive. They told her not to worry about grades, but to do her best. Her mother found reasons to praise her. "My parents were wonderful," Mary says. "They made me feel I belonged."

In high school, Mary found ways to compensate for her inability to read. She took courses like sewing and cooking, and excelled in public speaking by memorizing what other students read aloud to her.

Her first job – at a dress shop – involved selling, which she was good at, and filling out credit applications, which was a disaster. From there she moved to a day-care center, where she was spectacularly successful caring for four-year-olds but was unable to prepare written reports.

In a volunteer job at an orphanage, she taught patterning to children who were slow learners. Once, in a fit of despair, she blurted out to the teacher, "I should be down there on the floor crawling with those kids, because I can't read."

"That's impossible," the teacher said. "You're too intelligent not to be able to read." She was taken to an eye doctor, who diagnosed problems in focusing and in visual and depth perception. It was the first piece of her puzzle. "At last," she remembers exultantly, "a professional was telling me that it wasn't my fault, that there actually was something wrong."

Crying for Help. Then she met Jim Grigar at church, and he became part of her life. He would sit with Mary for hours, going through the eye exercises the doctor had prescribed. "It was only after I'd found out a little about my problem that I felt good enough about myself to fall in love," Mary says.

They were married in 1966 and a year later their son David was born. Other much-wanted babies arrived in quick succession. Taking care of a home and children was the one thing Mary knew she could do, though she still had to compensate for her handicap. She made grocery lists, for example, by copying words under pictures in newspaper ads.

Then David reached school age, and he began having problems that echoed in his mother's mind. "I'd talk to his teacher," she recalls, "and everything I heard – 'He's lazy . . . he just won't concentrate' – would bring back my own miserable school days and start me crying."

Mary's heart was actually crying out for help – not only for David, but for herself. An active adult leading a busy life, she still couldn't read a newspaper or a street sign or remember which channel her favorite TV program was on.

The help she needed came when Mary invited two acquaintances over for lunch. One was a psychotherapist who told Mary, "I suspect you might have minimal brain dysfunction." "Thanks a heap," Mary said, reverting to her habit of joking when she didn't know what else to do. "That's just what I need to hear."

Her guest suggested that Mary be tested for dyslexia and dyscalculia. She explained that dyslexia, meaning difficulty in reading, and dyscalculia, difficulty doing mathematics, might in Mary's case stem from her perception problems. "You may be unable for form or hold onto pictures in your mind," she told Mary.

"Better Than Crazy." That night as she lay in bed, Mary tried to picture the number 44. With a start, she realized that all she could see was one 4, and that it was lying on its side. She tried to picture her own hand, but could see only a thumb and an index finger. "Suddenly," says Mary, "I realized that's why I couldn't spell; why b's floated into d's. I couldn't visualize words or letters or keep them still in my mind."

Shortly thereafter, at a church meeting, Mary met a woman whose daughter had a similar problem. The woman invited Mary to speak at a convention on learning disabilities. It was there that the rest of the puzzle fell into place.

Sitting on a panel with four other adults with learning disabilities, she compared their stories with her own. "They were so similar it was spooky," she recalls. "By fifth grade we were all emotional wrecks."

The five adults, realizing how much they had suffered, hurled themselves into organizational work. "We never wanted another kid to go through what we had gone through," Mary says. "We may not have been able to write letters, but we could talk our heads off."

They formed a speakers' bureau to alert civic groups, teachers and the media about learning disabilities. (An estimated three million children have learning disabilities; the number of adults with this problem is unknown.) So successful was the bureau that Mary has been invited to international conventions and to the White House. She now works with a government agency for people who have learning disabilities, and advises teen-agers referred there.

"I've been accused of enjoying being handicapped," she says, laughing. "I answer, 'Yes, I do. It's better than being crazy.'"

Reaching Out. Mary now hears from similarly afflicted adults. One 40-year-old man, forced to quite his sales job because of the paper work involved, called her after a radio program to say he had been ready to commit suicide because he felt alone with a problem he did not understand. "It's so important," Mary says, "to know you're not alone. There are ways to get around a learning disability, but first you have to believe there is such a thing, then admit you've got it, then get on with coping with it."

Today, Mary Grigar, at 39, is an ambitious, witty woman who lectures, organizes volunteer groups, helps her husband with his commercial photography and typesetting business and effectively runs a household of five lively children.

She still has the visual memory of a six-year-old, the reading ability of a fifth-grader and the spelling ability of a third-grader. Her housekeeping methods are excellent examples of how she compensates for her handicap. Because her visual memory is so short, she attached her hairbrush to the bathroom mirror with a rope. She hangs her purse on a curtain rod in the kitchen.

Despite her difficulties, she is no longer weepy, no longer an outcast. Her mission is to explain what life is like for the learning disabled. "Other people climbing the educational mountain have the right kinds of boots," she says. "The LD person is doing it in bare feet. The pain and frustration involved in getting to the top are horrible." She is reaching out to help others make the long, difficult climb.

"LD dose not ga away," she writes. "There are Man & women today that cann't spell or do mate or read the new paper. They are not dummy. We want the word to know we hvee taln & warth."