

# Welcome!

This tool can be used either at intake or after learners are in class long enough to become comfortable with the program. If the screening device is being used to help determine placement of learners in a particular class, it should obviously be administered at or shortly after intake.

## **PROTOCOL FOR USING NLLSD**

These instructions presuppose that bilingual intake personnel are not available. If intake personnel who speak the language of the incoming student are present, the process will be easier. If no one speaks the language of incoming learners and they don't have sufficient oral skills to communicate in English, the task becomes more difficult. Whatever combination of verbal and nonverbal communicative skills that seem appropriate should be used to convey directions to the learner.

**1**

Learners are welcomed through the usual orientation process.

**2**

The administrator of the screening device gives learners the first three pages of the screening device and asks them to answer the questions on pages two and three without help from anyone else. If someone else is observed filling out the form, the learners should be encouraged to fill out the form themselves. If they insist that they cannot fill out the form (perhaps offering reasons such as, "I left my glasses at home"), the friend can be allowed to fill out the form, but the administrator should indicate on the form that someone other than the learner wrote the answers.

3

The administrator of the screening device asks learners to silently read stories one through four on pages four and five. After the learners finish reading, the story section should be returned to the administrator. (It might be useful to laminate these pages to facilitate reuse.)

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The purpose of the readings is to provide learners with a model for the writing sample coming up next. There is no comprehension test for these readings.

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4

If learners are . . .

. . . **able** to answer the questions on pages two and three, the administrator then asks them to provide a writing sample on page six. Extra paper should be available to learners in case they want to write more than one page or rewrite their compositions. Learners should be given as much time as they need to complete this writing sample.

. . . **unable** to answer the questions on pages two and three, they are **not** asked to provide the writing sample.

## WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THIS TOOL?

Regardless of the availability of bilingual personnel to read what learners have written on the form, several findings can be discerned from this screening device.

### Short Answers (pages two and three)

Learners' comfort level with printed material might be sensed by how they handle the form. Do they seem anxious as they read and answer the questions posed on pages two and three? Do they respond differently to the questions seeking yes/no or one-word answers (one through six) than to the questions requiring short phrases (seven through ten)? The answer to question three — *How many years did you go to school in your country?* — is of particular importance, as well.

The educational histories of learners who have difficulty responding to some or all of the questions should be explored further. The same holds true for learners who have had someone else fill out the form. At a minimum, it is important to observe learners' reading and writing behaviors in class.

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| * | While the form has been used as a way of looking at reading and writing abilities, avoid making the impression that literacy consists solely of filling out forms. In fact, literacy students need opportunities to practice a wide range of reading and writing. Instruction should include many kinds of written texts, including forms. |
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### Short Narratives (pages four and five)

The purpose of the short narratives on pages four and five is to prepare learners for the writing sample. The narratives model the kinds of writing the learners may wish to do themselves. Comprehension questions have purposely not been included since learners may not be familiar with the format. Some learners may be able to read the narratives, but have difficulty putting their own ideas on paper.

Since learners are asked to return the readings when they are finished, the administrator will begin to get a sense of how long it takes an average learner to read the passages. If learners take an unusually long time to read the passages, this may be an indication that it was a difficult task for them.

### Writing Sample (page six)

Something can be learned by the amount of text the learners put on paper and the speed with which they write. For learners whose language shares a Roman alphabet, the form of the actual letters may be an indication of how much writing the learner does on a regular basis. Poorly formed letters may indicate that the learner hasn't had much experience with print or doesn't write regularly.

Even for those learners whose language does not share a Roman alphabet, the amount of text they produce and the speed with which they write will provide an idea of their writing fluency.

The implication for instruction is that learners who don't have much experience writing will need more time to work on class assignments that involve writing. Objectives related to communication in writing and appropriate instructional strategies that help to develop writing ability are important. Possible strategies include language experience stories, dialogue journals, and process writing approaches.

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Learners who complete the first part of the form and seem to have no trouble producing a writing sample probably have the reading and writing skills that will permit them to participate in an ESOL class where reading and writing are commonly used in instruction. This is not always the case, however, as some may need special ESOL reading and writing instruction. This is especially true when the learners are from a language group not sharing a Roman alphabet. Though considered literate in their native language, they may have difficulty reading and writing in English.

Previous schooling and native language literacy levels should both be considered when planning instruction. Those learners who have had little or no previous schooling and do not appear to be literate in their native language generally require a more basic curriculum and different instructional strategies than those learners who can read and write in their native language.

The capability to informally assess native language literacy levels of prospective learners is very important in planning ESOL programming, selecting appropriate curricula, and planning effective instruction. This screening device, designed in response to a great need in the field of second language acquisition, is one component of that comprehensive assessment.