



## Teacher Guide

### What is this thing?

Hi! Welcome to the Route 66 Literacy. This site offers literacy materials to adolescents and young adults who have a variety of physical, cognitive, communicative, linguistic, and sensory impairments. In addition, Route 66 Literacy offers instructional strategies for teachers. Currently, the site is intended for adolescents and young adults who are reading and writing at beginning levels. Because it is based on an instructional approach that includes a range of activities and experiences that are required to teach *any* student to learn to read with comprehension and to write meaningful texts, we hope that it has broader applications and can support students of any age who read like beginners.

### What kind of literacy program is this?

This is an important question. As you may already know, there are many different beliefs around literacy instruction. Some books, teachers, and instructional guides advocate a more traditional, readiness-based, prerequisite-laden approach to early literacy instruction. Rather than thinking of literacy learning as an accumulation of isolated skills in a predetermined sequence, Route 66 Literacy treats it as a building of understandings and experiences. Since no one instructional approach works for all students, we have constructed a site that we believe provides students with the opportunity to engage in instruction that merges a range of approaches to build the necessary skills and understandings that are required to read and write conventionally. We call this balanced literacy instruction and it is based on the following premises:

- Literacy learning occurs when students are emotionally engaged, experience repetition in a variety of ways, and interact with a knowledgeable person.
- Students bring unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds to their reading and writing.
- Meaning is at the heart of reading and writing.

### What kinds of literacy activities does Route 66 Literacy offer?

There are three major activities in Route 66 Literacy:

- Reading
- Word Study
- Writing

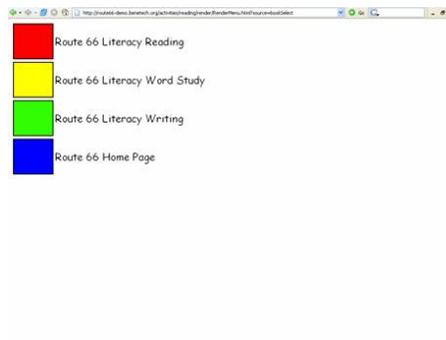
Each section provides a range of opportunities to read, to write, and to work with words. The activities within each section are consistent across units (such as 'Route 66 Literacy') and across themes (such as "Freedom-Lucky You, Lucky Me").

### What do I do if I get lost in the site?

If you ever feel you are lost and want to return to a more familiar place, look for the red MENU box. You'll either see it at the top, right-hand corner or in the lower center of each page.



When you click on it, you'll see four colored navigational buttons that look like the following:



These buttons have been designed so that your student can access them using the support interface of her choice. When you click on each one, you will return to the home page of either Reading, Word Study, and Writing or blue Route 66 Literacy Home button. This will return you to the first page that you encounter when logging on to the site.

## How do I know if Route 66 Literacy is right for my student?

It's definitely important for you to decide whether or not this site will be beneficial to your student. Perhaps your best strategy is to use this site with a student preliminarily, before launching headlong into using the site systematically. Beyond that, Route 66 Literacy is for adolescents and young adults who read and write at the beginning, conventional level (pre-primer or first grade). If you aren't sure if your student fits this description, you might want to take a minute and answer the following yes/no inventory.

1. Does s/he know that print (all the little black squiggles on a page) is a medium that people use to read and write and from which they make meaning?
2. Does s/he know that print is read from left to right, and from top to bottom?
3. Does s/he understand that readers use their eyes to track print across the page?
4. Does s/he know that reading and writing are important in our print filled world?
5. Does s/he understand that reading and writing allow people to make connections with each other and with the larger world?
6. Does s/he understand that reading and writing are valuable endeavors and that it's worth the effort it takes to learn to read and write?
7. Does s/he have an ability to hear the sounds in words without regard for the print itself (phonological awareness)?
8. Does s/he understand the relationship between symbols and sounds?
9. Can s/he label at least some of the more common letters and their sounds?
10. Can s/he read even a few sight words?

If you've answered yes to the majority of these questions, it's probably safe to say that your student is functioning at the beginning conventional level. You can then feel free to begin working with Route 66 Literacy. If not, then your student may be functioning at the emergent literacy level. Regardless of a perfect fit, Route 66 Literacy may still prove to be a valuable tool. While your student may not be able to engage in the lessons for the purposes for which they were intended, he can certainly develop many important literacy understandings through his interactions with you on the site.

## Reading

### What is included in the Reading section?

When you click on the Reading button (RED button), it will take you to the Reading Home Page. Here, the student will be asked to choose a theme. All of the themes within Route 66 Literacy have been chosen because of their respective popularity with adolescent and young adult readers. Within each theme, there are 4 units. Once the student chooses a unit, there are 4 reading options:

- Let's read this new book together,

- Let's reread this book,
- Let me read by myself, and
- I want to read other books about this choice.

### **What reading strategies should I be encouraging?**

When asked this question, most people will respond that the first and best strategy for reading an unfamiliar word is to sound it out. It's definitely a good start and a good strategy, particularly if your student has a strong sense of phonemic awareness (which means the ability to recognize that words are made up of discrete sets of sounds). But there are other strategies that are just as important and just as helpful, yet are often overlooked. Like Reading Recovery teachers, we encourage learners to employ meaning, sound, and sight cues as they endeavor to understand printed language. As you navigate each guided reading activity, you will find yourself asking, "Can we say it that way?" and, "Does it sound right?" and, 'Does it look right?' You'll find that you will be asking these three questions often, and in a variety of ways. These questions are important and by asking them, you will be modeling the kind of internal dialogue that needs to take place if the student (or anyone, for that matter) is going to read independently.

Notice that the prompts are different on different pages. Some prompts encourage students to take important clues from syntax, which means how a given sentence is structured. Other prompts encourage learners to employ knowledge of symbols and to look to the words themselves, and whether or not they look right. Still others ask learners to employ their knowledge of meaning, often from the context that the picture or the illustration provides. You'll notice that when a student has to choose from one of three choices and picks the wrong one, we don't make her pick until she gets the right one. We provide instructional feedback and go on.

### **Are there other things I can do to support my student as s/he learns to read and write?**

Yes, consider the following three principles as major supports to your student's emerging reading and writing abilities:

#### **1. Know your student:**

The first thing to do, if this hasn't happened already, would be to get to know your student as best you can. Reading, by its very nature, is a social act. As we read, we engage with others, both practically (here we are sharing this together), and theoretically, (I feel just like Harry Potter did when I started at a new school...) Consider the student's learning style and method(s) of communication. You will also want to become familiar with the student's work pace. Before you begin working with Route 66 Literacy, establish a signal between you and your student that will signify when you need to slow down, speed up, or clarify. Be responsive to the student's signals, both verbally and nonverbally. Note changes in posture or interest. It's definitely okay to go back over a tricky part or to bail out of an activity that seems ineffective or uninteresting to your student. Bear in mind that the

purpose in designing these lessons is not to trick students or to continuously check their knowledge. Instead, we want to offer students the most informative context that we can, to all of their responses, even the ones that may seem obviously wrong. The best (and truly only) motivation for learning to read is to want to learn to read, so using your knowledge of this person as a learner will help guide you from activity to activity.

## **2. Model good reading**

This may seem obvious, but another good strategy is to model good reading behavior. Reading should sound like talking so when you read aloud, do it with fluency, normal articulation, and with appropriate phrasing and emphasis. Your student's exposure to your best, reading voice is critical to her ability to develop her own inner voice, whether or not she uses speech to communicate.

## **3. Support the role of inner speech**

Additionally, the concept of inner speech is important to all readers, however, it is critical to readers who do not use speech as their primary means of communication. Have you ever noticed that when you read text that's too hard for you, you usually go back and read it again more slowly? Then, if it's still too hard, you'll read it aloud? What you're doing here is employing your inner voice. Most often, you probably don't even notice that you have one. But as text gets more difficult, your comprehension is adversely impacted and that's when you fall back on this voice, most literally. As you read, your inner voice is running a constant check against those three important questions that were mentioned above (Does it make sense? Can we say it that way? Does it look right?). When one doesn't check, that's when you slow down, and then ultimately, read it aloud. You can't read silently without an inner voice so it's important to know that it's there. As a reading and writing teacher, it's also important to know that the inner voice exists and that our job is to help students to develop and gain familiarity with their own inner voice.

### **Where should we begin reading?**

While this is not a basal activity and there is no specific order in which to proceed, we do suggest that reading a new book together is a good place to start. Why? By reading aloud and supporting your student's engagement with the text, you offer her an opportunity to make a connection with a written work that she probably could not make on her own. Your primary purpose as you sit beside this student is to be, "the more knowing other," who can model the relationship between reading and meaning making. In addition, reading a book together offers you, the teacher, the opportunity to determine which reading strategies your student can employ, and which he or she is still in the process of developing.

On each page, your first job is to read the large, black text to the left of the picture (and we recommend using your finger to point to each word as you read it). The purpose of scripting the words onto the blackboard is to help you to provide

instructional feedback to your student. Initially, it may feel awkward to read the words on the blackboard verbatim. That's understandable, and yet, in the beginning (and this will depend on your background knowledge and skill level in reading instruction), it may be more important that you follow these directions closely since they are designed to support your learning in teaching within the context of balanced literacy instruction. We also recognize that many of you will choose to ignore the teacher tutor and her blackboards. That is completely acceptable, particularly if you have experience in practical literacy instruction. We encourage you, however, to use the questions and other built-in opportunities for the student to respond to questions you pose.

### **Who is the lady in the blue skirt?**

We call her the teacher. Whenever you see her image on the screen, this is a cue that we want to offer you some guidance and support in teaching this lesson. A blackboard will give you directions about what you can say and do to fill the intention of each activity. The sentences that appear in white are for you to read aloud. In the beginning, we suggest that you follow the teacher directions as closely as is comfortable for you. As you become familiar with the site, you may find that you come to rely on the teacher less and less. That's fine (and actually, that's the idea!). Remember that in addition to helping your student read and write, we want to support you as you endeavor to become a more confident and proficient teacher within the context of balanced literacy instruction.

### **Why do I need to read the blackboards aloud?**

Many of the directions that appear on the teacher's blackboard are what we call, "instructional feedback." By providing context and clarification your student's errors in a supportive and constructive manner, you help make mistakes as informative as correct responses. You'll note that the teacher directions don't ever tell the student that s/he is wrong. By responding along the lines of, "Well, it could be that..." you are valuing all of your student's responses. Your role as the teacher is not to test knowledge and correct mistakes, but to clarify misunderstandings and encourage risk-taking. If your student has no communication difficulties, you would want to ask, "Why do you think that is the answer?" Our intention in creating Route 66 Literacy was to provide alternative means through which we can help the student think about her response and why it is or is not accurate. Using the language provided in this context can feel uncomfortable at first, but we think you will find its benefits are measurable.

### **What do I say when I see a letter between two hash marks (i.e. /j/) on the blackboard?**

Throughout your experience reading together on the site, you will see this notation frequently. When a letter appears between two hash marks, this is your cue to read this letter's sound, rather than its name. In our efforts to support a student's ability to read with comprehension, we ask them to attend to three kinds of cues: sight, meaning, and in this case, sound cues. It's important for your student to

have exposure and practice to all three cueing systems if s/he is to problem-solve effectively around unknown letters, sounds, and words.

### **We just read this book, why do we need to read it again?**

Reading, like any skill, requires lots and lots of successful practice. With practice, comes a sense of mastery. This sense of mastery is integral to your student's developing sense of himself as a reader. Rereading a book offers learners the opportunity to become more strategic in their reading by allowing them to think less about the forms of print and more about its function. By increasing the exposure to the same text and adding variety to the reading of it, students can then make new and different connections with the material. Repetition increases the opportunity for learners to make personal connections to their reading. It allows learners to begin to hear that they, too, can sound (in their heads) like good readers as they become more and more familiar with a given text.

Additionally, rereading a text is something that all good readers do, in order to increase comprehension, fluency with words, or simply for the pleasure of doing so. How many times have you reread a favorite book, poem, or story? In each rereading lesson, you'll notice that the teacher appears on the first and last pages. The aim here is to reread the story with fluency while increasing comprehension. As stated in the teacher directions, this is an important time to pay attention to the non-verbal and/or the verbal cues of your student. At the end of the story, the teacher will reappear so that together, you and your student can reflect on the reading when the story is complete.

### **Why should we let the student read by her/himself? Isn't the whole point that we work together?**

Yes, working with a more knowing other (meaning you!) is a large part of this process. But so too, is self-directed reading. Both established and developing readers need to spend time interacting with books in a variety of ways. This includes time alone. Self-directed reading poses important challenges to your student, among them the chance to pick materials that are appropriate to her reading level, the chance to practice skill application, and the chance to understand why a person would want to read after she learns how to do so. Simply put, readers need to read for individual purposes. This time spent alone reading will not only increase his fluency and familiarity with reading, it will help your student to consider how reading can support her, not just as a student, but as a whole person.

### **What is the significance of this stack of other books?**

Behind the stack of books icon



## I want to read other books about ...

on the Reading A Books webpage, you'll see 3-4 books that serve as support stories to the new book. The majority of these books are written at reading levels lower than the level found in the first reading of the new book. The purpose is so that students can have success in reading independently. Often you'll find just one word on a page that matches the adjacent picture. In other books you'll find that the text is written in verse and offers your student the opportunity to use her knowledge of sound and rhythm to read and predict text. Though it is an activity that is ultimately designed for independent use, it's ok to offer support or help until your student gains the confidence and/or the skills s/he'll need to read on his/her own.

### **Isn't this a reading activity? Why would my student write a review of the book?**

Yes, it is a reading activity and yes, the purpose is for your student to spend time and develop mastery with high-interest and readable text. But, one way your students will develop a deeper understanding of the books they read is by evaluating them, comparing them with other books they've read, and relating them to their own experiences and knowledge about the topic. The book reviews provide a structured means to do this. After reading a book, students can choose to write a review about the book. When writing a book review the student can begin by rereading the book, reading what others have written in their reviews, or moving directly into writing their own review. The site supports students in clarifying their evaluation, by offering a choice of positive, negative, and neutral responses. Furthermore, it supports students by offering a word bank and supporting letter-by-letter input using a standard or alternative keyboard input. The overall purpose of this activity is to provide students with a natural bridge between their reading and writing behaviors and to demonstrate that reading promotes thoughts, feelings, and opinions that can be expressed through writing.

### **After reading, what should we do next, writing or word study?**

There is no best order to these activities. What you might use as a guiding principle though, is that the first activities within Reading, Writing, and Word Study tend to be good indicators of the kinds of activities and experiences you will find within each section. Your choice should probably be based on the student's feedback, his/her personal style of learning, and your knowledge of the student's aptitudes and interests. Also keep in mind that most learners need a broad base of proficiency across the reading and writing spectrum if they are to develop fully. While it's important to allow your student to guide his choices, it's also important to note which activities/experiences he consistently avoids. It's preferred that he take

the initiative but it's also ok for you to intervene if you feel he needs exposure and practice in a particular area. The real strength of balanced literacy instruction is the balance of instruction that it provides for developing readers and writers. If you think of all the activities and experiences that are required for reading/writing proficiency as individual links in a chain, then it makes sense that each link needs to be strong and connected if the chain is to function as a whole.

## Word Study

### What is included in the Word Study section?

When you click on the yellow Word Study button,



it will take you to the Word Study Home Page. Here, the student will be asked to choose a theme. We have chosen specific theme areas based on research on what adolescents are most interested in. Within each theme, there are 4 units. Once you have selected a unit, you can choose from a variety of word study activities, including **Making Words**, **Compare/Contrast**, and **Other Word Activities**.

### Why study words?

We've called it Word Study but really, it's as much about the opportunity to work with words as it is to study them. By working with words, learners can become more strategic in their abilities to read and write as they begin to see similarities, differences, and anomalies in the forms and functions of print. We have established our contention that practice is critical to literacy learning and development. The purpose of Word Study is to engage in this practice. But there's something else to it, too. Word Study offers learners the chance to play with words and begin to learn their internal structures. With the opportunity to play, learners make emotional connections between themselves and the material. This is when lasting learning takes place.

### Where should we start?

There isn't any best place to start. Think about which activities s/he needs the most support in, which she'll exhibit the most mastery in, and which she'll enjoy the most. Don't forget that you can always bail out if an activity feels too hard, too time-consuming, or just plain inappropriate. And, as ever, self-direction might positively influence your student's ability to stick with an activity and make it

meaningful. So use your knowledge of your student and what she needs most to support her reading and writing as a guiding principle to determine the order in which you do each activity.

### **What's the point of making words?**

When you click on the making words crane, you'll receive directions about how to support your student in making words. The purpose of this activity is twofold:

- To help the student to see how to build and construct words by adding, changing, or deleting letters and,
- To see the relationships between different words.

As your student navigates the activity, you'll find that the student is asked to make larger and larger words until at the end, the teacher directs you and your student together, to make a big word. As you explore this activity, feel free to encourage and support any observations your student might make about the relationships between words or his new understandings about how to construct them. ("Yes, pan and man are similar to each other, except for the first letter," or, "You're right, off and on both start with o.")

### **Why do we see only the head and shoulders of the teacher in certain activities?**

Whenever you see just the head and shoulders of the teacher (rather than her whole body), this means that a speech bubble will appear above her head and give you important instructional prompts. Whereas the blackboards are intended to inform your language as a reading teacher, the prompts are designed to offer you quick verbal prompts to maximize the instructional value of a given activity. So, when you see the head and shoulders icon, point your mouse arrow onto the image and click (as directed) for more prompts.

### **Why do you need to double click on some of the speech bubbles?**

It's true that in some activities, the speech bubbles require you to click first to read the prompt and then quickly a second time to make it disappear. This is because the prompts are for you; they are not intended for the student to read and copy. This is also particularly true in many of the word study activities. One of the more important long-term goals of these activities is to help your student to develop mental models of words and their structures. When a student gathers enough experience doing this, he is able to make more informed guesses about unknown words. This ability serves to support not just his reading, but also his writing. No activity on this site is intended as a copying exercise; therefore, it's important that you double click as directed.

### **What's the purpose of Word Sort?**

At the end of making words, the student will have a chance to sort the newly

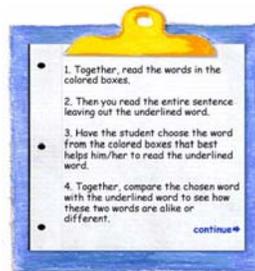
created words. The teacher prompts will direct you to ask the student to look to beginning and the end of words and group them according to their similarities. This too, will serve the end purpose of identifying the sounds within words and their structural relationships to each other.

### **Why do students need to compare and contrast words?**

When you click on the blue and white yin/yang icon,



you'll receive directions about how to conduct a Compare/Contrast lesson.



One important purpose of this activity is to see words and their similarities and differences. Another important aspect to this exercise is to encourage students to use knowledge of the structure of familiar words in reading unfamiliar words. Good readers use this strategy frequently and effectively and when your student is able to consistently make the right choice, then we know that her understanding of words and their structures is not an isolated understanding, but one that has broad meanings and applications. This developing ability will aid her as she ventures into reading more and more challenging texts and it will also aid her in her ability to choose words that capture her self-expression and meaning. When your student doesn't consistently make the right choice, encourage her to take a second look at not only the underlined word, but also at the choices given. This is a good opportunity for self-correction. Self-correction is an important skill because it helps readers and writers to constantly check back and compare what they know with what they are beginning to know.

### **What about these other word activities?**

When you click on the scrabble pieces, you have three choices. You can either do a crossword, listen to a tongue twister, or sort letters. These are all opportunities to play with letters, words, and their sounds.

### **What are you supposed to do with the Tongue Twisters?**

Basically, you just listen but you can also laugh! The tongue twister is included in this section because it reminds us of the importance of mnemonics for beginning readers and writers. Mnemonics are memory strategies for learning letters and their sounds. Seeing the letter while listening to each silly sentence reinforces the relationship between letterforms and their functions.

### **What's the purpose of doing a crossword puzzle?**

If your student is not familiar with the crossword format, you might want to rip one out of a newspaper or magazine and talk about its purpose (as a game/hobby), its format (and its lack of convention), and its place in our popular culture. As a word study activity, crosswords have two important purposes. The first one is to encourage students to listen and identify onset and ending sounds within words. The second purpose is to encourage students to use simple clues to generate the context for a given word. As readers, we all occasionally encounter unfamiliar words that require us to make our best guesses about its meaning, based on whatever information we have available. Often context and our general knowledge of words are what allow us to piece together enough meaning so as not to interrupt our comprehension of the text. Thus, the crossword puzzle encourages students to contemplate context by using their knowledge of familiar words within known sentences to make good guesses.

### **When do I correct my student's crossword puzzle errors?**

Ideally, correcting student work is a collaborative task between you and your student. Once your student has finished the puzzle, click on the teacher. The corrected model will appear so that your student can self-correct against the model. Self-correction poses many learning opportunities so be sure to provide him the time he needs to check his work against the model. Provide verbal support to help him to understand his errors and his good guesses. And don't forget, h\_ \_ \_ fun!

### **Is letter sort the same as word sort?**

Well, they're both sorting activities, but in word sort, students are encouraged to see the similarities across words. In letter sort, the student is sorting letters not by their sound, but by their appearance. Without an integrated knowledge of print, students will not be able to engage effectively in reading or writing. Letter sort offers students with a limited knowledge of print (and how it appears on the page) an opportunity to gain familiarity with letter and number forms, and their many unique and similar characteristics. Its purpose is to help students to see the physical relationships across the letters in the alphabet and then also, between letters and numbers.

**NOTE: Route 66 Literacy, Version 1.0, is designed for use with the Firefox browser. Later versions will include Route 66 Literacy for use with the Internet Explorer browser. The grayed sections of this document are those**

**Route 66 Literacy feature/functions due in Version 2.0.**

**The demo site for Route 66 Literacy is:**

**<http://route66-demo.benetech.org>**

**The website for Route 66 Literacy is:**

**<http://www.Route66Literacy.org>**

**Login: initialteacher**

**Password: password**

**Select a student to work with: New Student**

**Select a unit: Route 66 Literacy**