

## Aadan from Somalia

Aadan came to the United States nine years ago as a refugee when he was 19. Before that, he attended school for only three years in a refugee camp and has minimal literacy skills in his own language. He is married and has four school-aged children. He works as an attendant in a parking garage and attends English classes three mornings a week. Due to his limited literacy skills, he has been placed in a beginning-level English language acquisition class. At the same time, he has strong oral skills and is quite confident communicating with teachers and people in his community. His dream is to one day get a high school equivalency diploma.

### What are Aadan's personal and professional goals?

#### Personal (Home and Community) Goals:

- Read documents sent home from his children's school
- Support his children's academic achievement
- Take part in community activities/events that affect the well-being of his family

#### Professional Goals:

- Aadan's current job apparently does not require a high-school equivalency. We can assume that with further education and a high school equivalency diploma, he will be eligible for higher-paying jobs. With four children, this is most likely a concern for him.
- Handling conflict at work and using appropriate communication strategies (e.g., dealing with angry customers, reporting a break-in to a supervisor) - the kind of sophisticated communication skills repertoire that one needs to have in customer service.
- We can assume that Aadan gets by managing work documents (HR, pay, etc.) and he can rely on co-workers and friends for support with reading more complex texts, but it's safe to assume that he would appreciate having the literacy skills to navigate workplace print on his own.

#### Academic Goals:

- Move up through English language acquisition courses to pre- high school equivalency diploma classes.
- Improve his literacy skills.
- Attend high school equivalency diploma classes and take the high school equivalency exam.

### What language and skills do you think he needs to meet these goals?

How many times have your students stated "get a high school equivalency diploma" as a goal? Do you feel that they have any concept of the many steps it takes to get there? Are they able to set short-term goals to meet steps along the way? What kind of program might enhance Aadan's current work experience while also preparing him to advance to the "bridge course" in his program?

**In reality, these are the kind of reading skills Aadan will ultimately need:**

- Pre-read and scan academic materials to get a sense of a text's scope and emerging meaning
- Determine the author's purpose, intended audience, tone, and the text's general context
- Recognize and understand a work's thesis or theme and the methods of organization used to support the thesis or develop the theme
- Summarize, paraphrase, and synthesize ideas from what he has read
- Evaluate the evidence presented and state an opinion about what he has read

**In his writing, he will need to be able to...**

- Use effective word choice, vocabulary, idioms, grammar, and sentence structures
- Brainstorm, draft, and outline ideas for essays and other forms of academic writing
- Develop a thesis and supporting topics and organize evidence using basic rhetorical patterns
- Integrate material from outside sources in his own writing
- Cite sources appropriately and maintain academic integrity in his work

**How can instruction in his beginning-level English class begin to lay a foundation for these skills?**

- Right now, Aadan needs focused literacy instruction. Because he has strong oral skills, an approach that draws on that strength would benefit him greatly (e.g., whole-part-whole; Language Experience; meaning-based, contextualized phonics) using motivating content and topics.
- With his limited formal schooling, he needs intensive practice with reading and listening strategies, note-taking, and classroom expectations/routines that will help him to work on his language skills more independently. If he finds himself in a class focused on life skills competencies (opening a bank account, going to the doctor), his needs won't be met. He needs to be working with meaningful content that represents what he may encounter at school or work.
- He needs exposure to and practice reading a variety of text types (e.g., short prose, charts, graphs).

**What strengths does he bring and what challenges does he face in meeting his goals based on the information provided?**

**Strengths:**

- Resilience: While working and raising a family, Aadan is committed to his education.
- Strong communication skills
- Confidence in his ability to communicate with others
- Experience in the workplace

**Challenges:**

- Limited formal schooling: With limited formal schooling in his first language, or in a high school in the U.S., Aadan did not acquire the academic language skills needed to meet his educational goals.
- Demands of work and family
- Managing his expectations: He has a long road ahead of him, but with time and the right supports, it can be possible for him to attain his goals.

It would be wonderful if Aadan had access to a **contextualized, career-pathways program (visit Module 3 to learn all about that model)**. A large adult education program in Minnesota (St. Paul Public Schools R. M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning) offers content-based, career-focused courses even for ELL 2-4 (CASAS Reading 191-220): “Introduction to Customer and Retail Service” or “Introduction to Healthcare Careers.” Short of this, learning career-focused content alongside English language skills can be part of *any* program.

To learn more and stay abreast of overall trends and practices in working with adult English language learners, visit the Adult English Language Learners LINCS community for resources and ongoing discussion: <https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/adult-english-language-learners>