



# Adapting an Existing Health Document to Increase Awareness About Dietary Supplements for the Intensive English Program

Catherine Maheny, Maris Ebeling, Emily Flaherty, Ibrahim Alsulaimani

Advisor: Dr. Ann Biswas

## Abstract

Health literacy is an individual’s ability to understand health information and integrate the information to make informed decisions in order to reduce health risks and enhance overall quality of life. We partnered with the Intensive English Program (IEP) to revise an existing health document about dietary supplements for students in this program.

### Original document created by the FDA



## Problem

The initial health document created by the FDA had a readability level of 12.0 according to the Microsoft Flesch-Kincaid readability tool and this was a problem because level two IEP students read at a 3rd to 4th grade level. The language of the document used many words with more than two syllables and had long compound sentences that would be difficult for our audience to understand.

## Methods

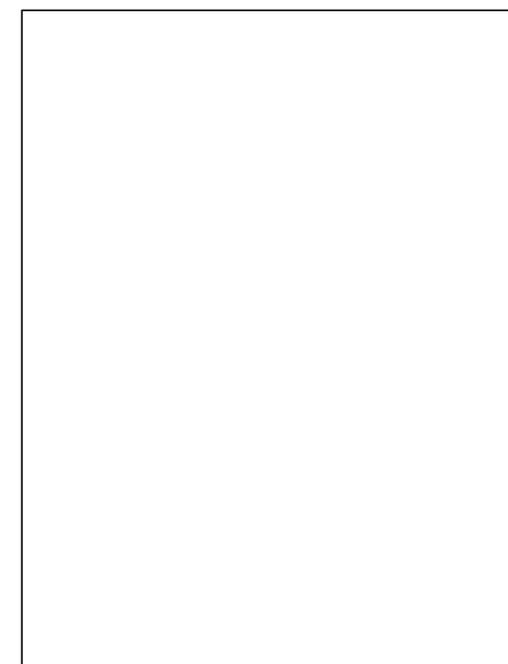
The literacy level of IEP students was assessed in a field-visit and we determined that their knowledge of the topic was limited. We conducted a health literacy analysis of the original document and found it had barriers in several health literacy domains, including fundamental, scientific and civic literacy. The readability level of the original document was determined using the SMOG test. The results of these tests were used to alter the original document to for the IEP students.



## Result

The initial document was not suitable for the IEP students due to its readability level and to accommodate this several changes had to be made to the health document like varying sentence structure and eliminating unnecessary jargon. We further reduced the amount of text on the document by including pictures depicting common symptoms of vitamin deficiency.

### Revised document



## Conclusion

The changes made to the health document decreased the readability level to a 4.4 and made the document easier for the IEP students to understand. For example, during the field-test the IEP students were able to effectively explain a situation where they would take a dietary supplement like Vitamin C. Overall, the changes made to the health document allowed the IEP students to have access to a health document that they were able to read and understand and increased their understanding of dietary supplements.