

**New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Adult Education & Literacy**

New Jersey Assessment Policy

Adult Basic Education/English Language Acquisition

*Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title II
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act*



July 1, 2020

Standardized Testing Policy Guidelines

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**New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Adult Education and Literacy
State Assessment Policy**

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

A. Need for the State Assessment Policy

New Jersey provides and requires assessments to measure the achievement of literacy and language skills for adult students and ties achievement to quality and performance. The passage of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) in 1998 placed a focus on the development of an accountability system for Adult Education. As a result, the National Reporting System (NRS), an outcome based reporting system, for the State-administered, federally funded adult education program, was developed to meet the requirements for program accountability. The NRS guidelines mandate that the only way a program can report educational gain is by demonstrating that a student has moved from one NRS level to the next based on their standardized assessment scores.

In addition, a comprehensive performance accountability system is required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (P.L. 113-128). The assessments used in New Jersey were chosen for reliability and validity as an accurate way to measure student progress. The assessment policy standardizes the process of determining student progress and completion of Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs). Every funded program is responsible and held accountable for the integrity of the data entered into the State's management information system – Literacy Adult Community Education System (LACES).

The [NRS](#) EFLs are determined using approved standardized assessments (CASAS, TABE CLAS-E, BEST Plus 2.0, and BEST Literacy). All students are placed into an appropriate EFL as determined by the standardized assessments chosen by the State. A subsequent post-test shows students' progress. Results of the pre- and post-test data determine the state's performance targets negotiated annually with the United States Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), professional development planning, and the need for program improvement.

B. Purposes and Uses of Assessment

In addition to using required standardized assessments for NRS reporting and accountability, programs use assessments for instructional purposes. Assessment data should be used to inform program evaluation and instructional design to better meet the needs of students and instructors. Programs are encouraged to supplement standardized assessments with instructional-based, portfolio-based, employment/career-based, and/or teacher-created assessments. Quality assessment data plays a major role in many areas to:

1. Inform students about skill levels and place them in the most appropriate instructional program;
2. Help students determine short and long term goals;
3. Use information as a diagnostic guide to instruction;
4. Pre- and post-test to record progress and demonstrate EFL completion;
5. Plan and develop professional development activities; and

6. Manage program improvement and planning and assess comparability across local programs.

Another purpose of assessment is to assist students in exploring their strengths and weaknesses; and developing an understanding of where their strengths lie and what areas may need further development to obtain employment, attain their High School Equivalency (HSE), or enter postsecondary education or vocational/occupational training leading to credential attainment. The assessment process includes testing along with a collection of other information, including the student's life, work, and educational experiences, their educational and employment goals, interests, motivation/drive, and their current support needs. An interview should be conducted with the student by program intake personnel and/or by the student's teacher.

C. Summary and Overview

All tests approved by the state of New Jersey for use in Adult Education and Literacy programs are selected from those approved by the NRS. These standardized tests are designed to assess learning along a continuum from beginning literacy and English language acquisition through completion of secondary level skills. Programs should select the test instrument based on the student's goals and the instructional focus of the program.

General assessment practices include pre-test and post-test procedures and appear in Section II of this document. Data quality control is also addressed in Section II. Section III describes each approved instrument for use in New Jersey with information concerning locators, parallel forms, minimum and recommended hours between pre- and post-testing, test administrator training, accommodations, and administration and scoring procedures.

D. Resources for Information and Assistance

- Individuals requiring information on training for assessments should contact Dr. Danielle Jubanyik, Ed.D., Professional Development Coordinator, at 609-292-6640 or Danielle.Jubanyik@dol.nj.gov.
- Individuals requiring information or assistance related to the assessment policy should contact Cheyenne Frenz at 609-633-8135 or Cheyenne.Frenz@dol.nj.gov.
- For specific or additional information about **CASAS** assessments or to order CASAS products, contact CASAS at 800-255-1036, casas@casas.org, or www.casas.org.
- For specific or additional information about **TABE** assessments or to order TABE products, contact Data Recognition Corporation at 800-538-9547, ShelfCustomerService@DataRecognitionCorp.com, or www.tabetest.com.
- For specific or additional information about **BEST** assessments or to order BEST products, contact Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) at 866-845-2378, Option 1 or www.cal.org.

SECTION II: GENERAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

A. Assessments Permitted

Approved assessments in New Jersey are:

- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (**CASAS**) – **Reading GOALS Series** – forms 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, and 908 are approved for use on paper and through the computer-based delivery format through February 5, 2025 for **ABE students**.
- **CASAS – Math GOALS Series** – forms 900, 913, 914, 917, and 918 are approved for use on paper and through the computer-based delivery format through March 7, 2023 for **ABE students**.

- **CASAS – Reading Assessments (Life and Work, Life Skills, Reading for Citizenship, Reading for Language Arts-Secondary Level)** – forms 27, 28, 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, 188, 310, 311, 513, 514, 951, 952, 951X, and 952X are approved for use on paper and through the computer-based delivery format through February 2, 2023 for **ELA students**.
- **CASAS – Life and Work Listening Assessment (LW Listening)** – forms 981L, 982L, 983L, 984L, 985L, and 986L are approved for use on paper and through the computer-based delivery format through February 2, 2023 for **ELA students**.
- **TABE Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS – E)** (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) – forms A and B are approved for use on paper through February 2, 2023 for **English Language Acquisition (ELA) students**.
- **Basic English Skills Test (BEST Plus 2.0)** (Speaking and Listening Skills) – forms D, E, and F are approved for use on paper and through computer-adaptive delivery format through February 2, 2023 for **ELA students**.
- **Basic English Skills Test (BEST Literacy)** (Reading and Writing Skills) – forms B, C, and D are approved for use on paper through February 2, 2023 for **ELA students**.

B. Students to be Assessed

All students in adult education programs must be pre-tested using a state-approved standardized test at intake/orientation or within 12 hours of attendance; these 12 hours may include up to 4 hours of assessment time. It is recommended that pre-testing be done in multiple subject areas. Pre-testing in multiple subject areas is beneficial for guiding instruction as well as for improved performance

outcomes. The exception to this recommendation would be if a student specifically requests to only study one subject area as determined through the case management process.

As of July 1, 2017 programs receive credit for students making an EFL gain in any level-defining subject area.

C. Pre-testing

1. Student Orientation to Testing Procedures, Purposes, and Results

The testing process should be transparent and explained in advance to students. Before testing, students should be told why they will be tested and what the test results will be used for. Students should quickly know their scores. It is important to let them know when they will have their results and that the meaning of those results is explained.

2. Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Placement

In LACES, students are tracked according to their lowest EFL and populated on NRS Table 4 in that EFL unless a local staff member manually changes the subject area. However, programs receive credit for students making an EFL gain in *any* of the level-defining subject areas if scores are entered into LACES. These levels are used to determine educational gains in post-tests for federal reporting.

3. Baseline for Returning Students

A returning student's post-test can be pushed forward and considered a pre-test provided the interim does not exceed 6 months. *All subject areas should be pushed forward.* Re-testing is an option if staff believe it would be in the best interest of the student.

D. Post-testing

1. Post-test Rate

Programs are required to post-test a minimum of 60% of their students with the exception of students who pre-tested at ASE High. No progress test is available if the student places in ASE High upon program entry that will result in an EFL gain. The *educational* outcome/Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) for students testing at the ASE High level is passing an HSE exam. In addition, if a student entering a program at *any* EFL takes and passes an HSE exam, the student will populate NRS Table 4 as having achieved a MSG. Although New Jersey requires a 60% post-test rate, it is recommended that *all* students meeting the minimum numbers of hours needed for post-testing be tested during the program year.

Devising an effective testing schedule is critical to program success. Being able to post-test a high percentage of students is important for two reasons. First, post-test scores determine educational gain, which is an important NRS measure. Second, the percentage of students post-

tested is also used to measure student retention. A low percentage may indicate that a program is unable to retain its students long enough for them to be post-tested.

2. Minimum Hours between Pre- and Post-Test

Students may not be post-tested until they accrue *at least* the minimum hours of instruction established by the test publisher. Students may accrue hours in excess of the minimum hours of instruction. A movement up from one EFL to the next in any subject area being tracked in LACES will be shown as a positive outcome on the federal report.

3. Required Instructional Hours Between Pre- and Post-Tests

CASAS: 40 hours minimum, 70-100 hours recommended

TABE CLAS-E: 40 hours minimum, 50-60 hours recommended

BEST Plus 2.0: 60 hours minimum, 80-100 hours recommended

BEST Literacy: 60 hours minimum, 80-100 hours recommended

4. Exception to the Minimum Number of Hours between Pre- and Post-Test

In limited cases, *as an exception*, not a program rule, students who have a valid pre-test and have indicated that they must leave the program before receiving the test publisher recommended minimum number of hours of instruction for post-testing may be administered a post-test if *at least* 30 hours of instruction has occurred and; the instructor has reasonable evidence to suggest that a post-test will result in an educational gain. A note must be entered into the student's comments folder in their LACES record for auditing purposes.

E. Distance Learning

Assessment of Distance Learning Students

Students enrolled in distance learning classes must be assessed according to the same policies and procedures as students who are not enrolled in distance learning classes. All assessments for distance learning students shall be administered face-to-face following the test-publisher's guidelines.

1. Definition

Distance learning is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Students may still receive face-to-face instruction while participating in distance learning. Distance learning materials come in a variety of media including but not limited to: print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs and other online technology. Instructors support distance learning through the following methods including but not limited to: communication via mail, telephone, email, online technologies and software, or face-to-face instruction.

2. Distinction between a Distance Learning Participant and a Participant with Proxy Hours

For a student to be counted as a distance learning participant in a program year, the preponderant amount of instruction must be delivered through distance learning. A distance learning participant is a student who has more proxy hours than direct instructional hours.

3. Requirement for Direct Contact Hours

Students in distance learning must have at least 12 hours of direct contact with the program before they can be counted for reporting purposes. Direct contact hours involve interaction between the student and program staff. This can be a combination of direct face-to-face contact as well as contact through telephone, video, teleconference or online communication, in which the identity of the student can be verified. Live online discussions, telephone conferment calls, monitored labs and live video broadcasts to remote locations are example of direct contact hours that are countable under this definition.

4. Proxy Contact Hours

In addition to direct contact hours, programs may also report proxy hours to track time students spend on distance learning activities. Proxy hours differ from direct contact hours in that the identity of the student and/or the exact amount of time spent on a learning activity cannot always be verified directly.

5. Distance Learning Models

In order to determine a student's proxy hours a program must use an approved distance learning curriculum and one of the following models:

- Clock Time Model: assigns proxy hours based on time that a student is connected to or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time. Proxy hours calculated through this model must utilize curricula that electronically track time the student spends interacting with instructional material and disconnects after a present period of inactivity.
- Teacher Certification Model: assigns a fixed number of proxy hours for each activity in a distance learning curriculum based on teacher verification of the extent to which a student engaged in or completed the assignment. Proxy hours are awarded based on the instructor's certification of student's completion of assignments. Instructors may award full proxy hour credit if the assignment is completed and demonstrated competence in the instructor's professional judgement. Instructors may award half of the full proxy hour credit if the assignment is only partially completed but still demonstrates competence. Assignments which do not demonstrate competence must be submitted by the students in order to be counted for proxy hour time.
- Learner Mastery Model: assigns a fixed number of proxy hours based on student mastery of each lesson of the distance learning curriculum as demonstrated by passing a test with a high percentage (usually 70% to 80%) of correct answers. Proxy hours are awarded

based on a passing score on a test over a particular assignment, lesson, or unit. The passing rate will be set at a minimum of 70% unless otherwise recommended.

6. Assessment

All students engaged in distance learning courses will be pre-tested prior to program entry and post-tested after the same amount of instructional time as other students, according to the State's assessment policy and test publisher's guidelines. Both direct contact hours and proxy contact hours are counted to calculate the amount of instructional time. Students must appear in person at a proctored program site for pre-testing and post-testing. Assessments must be conducted through face-to-face interaction with a trained test administrator in a secure setting using only National Reporting System (NRS) approved assessments.

7. Reporting Hours and Data Entry

All of the required NRS data elements will be recorded in the LACES management information system (MIS). Programs will report all instructional hours into LACES. Direct hours and proxy hours should be recorded and maintained in student files for monitoring and audit purposes.

8. Distance Learning Program Approval

Each program that plans to offer a distance learning program that counts distance learners for federal reporting must submit a plan for approval to NJLWD prior to implementing the course(s). Please contact your Regional Coordinator with any questions regarding your distance learning program plan for approval.

F. Training for Administering Assessments

New Jersey requires that test administrators be properly trained before administering standardized assessments. All programs must comply with all training requirements established by the publishers of the assessment instrument, including education and other minimum requirements. Local programs can train their staff as test administrators through the test publisher or by contracting with a certified or qualified test administration trainer.

Program staff must be trained in test administration and scoring to ensure that scores are valid and reliable. Training ensures accurate use of the tests and interpretation of learner results and maintains the integrity and quality of the assessment process. Programs must maintain at least one test administrator for each test instrument in use at the program and should develop a plan to determine how many testers are required to pre- and post-test the maximum number of students efficiently and effectively. Programs are responsible for maintaining records of staff trained to administer tests in their programs. These records must be readily available for monitoring and audit purposes.

NJ LWD Title II staff will ensure training opportunities are made available in each of the approved assessments annually either in-person or online. Training will be required for local adult education program staff that administer and/or score assessments, have responsibility for the local grantees' assessment procedure and oversight, and are involved in gathering, analyzing, compiling, and reporting data for year-end statistical reports. Training is also open to WIOA and corrections partners, as well as other community partners who administer approved NRS assessments and partner with an AEFLA funded program. At least one staff member at each local program must be up to date with training

requirements required for the assessment the grantee is administering. Local program staff members are not authorized to administer assessments if they are not up to date with training requirements. As assessments are updated, NJ LWD Title II staff will inform grantees if additional training is needed to administer the new version.

Additionally, all NJ Title II grantees and partners are required to participate in annual Data Validation and Data Collection training which is organized through NJ LWD Title II staff. Please refer to section H., numbers 2, 3, and 4 for more information regarding this annual training requirement.

G. Accommodating Students with Disabilities or Other Special Needs

Testing accommodations provide students with disabilities an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities without interference from sensory, motor, language, or psychological skills caused by the disability itself. Accommodations may alter the conditions for administering the test such as changes in timing, setting or responding, or they may change the format of the test such as use of a Braille version or text enlarger. Appropriate accommodations meet the needs of students without changing what a test is intended to measure.

The accountability standards in WIOA include the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. WIOA, effective, July 2015, focuses on students most in need, such as students with low levels of literacy skills, ELA students, and those with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation has long been recognized as an essential component of the testing process. Further, it is legally mandated under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

While the ADA does not define reasonable accommodation, it provides a list of examples of what might constitute a reasonable accommodation. With respect to testing, the ADA requires that tests be given to students with impaired sensory or manual skills in a format and manner that minimize the impact of any impaired skill on the test results, unless the test is designed to measure that particular skill. Once it has been determined that the test taker has a disability that is covered by the ADA, the test administrator should initiate discussion with the test candidate to help identify an appropriate and reasonable accommodation.

Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations may request assessment instruments in alternative formats and alterations in test administration procedures. Documented disabilities mean that the individual can present a formal document provided by a qualified professional (physician, educational counselor, psychologist, special education teacher, or a rehabilitation counselor) such as a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment, or other formal record of disability that includes a diagnosis of the disability, whether it is a medical, psychological, learning, developmental, and/or attention deficit disorder. Test administrators must follow accommodation guidance provided by the test publisher. It is important to note that not all students with disabilities will need testing accommodations. ***Programs should contact the specific test publisher if they have questions regarding accommodations.***

H. Quality Control Procedures

1. Test Security

- a) The local program's operational procedures must address test security.
- b) Questions or answers that appear on any test may not be used for instruction.
- c) Assessment materials must be safeguarded, including test administration manuals, actual student paper-based or electronic tests, and answer sheets that contain marks or responses or student digital test results.
- d) If test materials become defaced or not usable, contact the publisher for instructions for disposal.
- e) No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted unless explicit permission to do so is in writing from the test publisher. Reproducing test materials is a violation of federal copyright law.
- f) Program staff must adhere to all test security procedures and policies provided by the test publisher.
- g) Original score sheets from test and/or electronic score reports with results of students' pre- and post-test scores must be stored and/or backed up on appropriate media or printed out and filed in hard copy and be available for local, state, and federal monitoring.
- h) Test administrators must remain in the testing room throughout the entire test session to ensure that students follow all testing rules. Examinees must refrain from talking during the test session or seeking help from other students in any way, including the use of electronic devices.

2. Error-Checking and Quality Control - Identifying Missing and Inaccurate Data

Programs must have procedures for checking data for completeness and accuracy following a schedule with clear deadlines. An appropriate number of staff should be assigned to perform these data checking functions. Staff assigned to these duties should review all data forms as soon as possible for completeness and accuracy. To do their job effectively, these staff members must have access to all staff – teachers, intake staff, counselors, and administrative staff – and have the authority to obtain cooperation.

3. Ongoing Training for Data Collection

Quality data collection procedures will result in valid and reliable data only if staff understand and follow them. Lead agency and partner agency program directors are required annually to be up-to-date on NRS policy, accountability policies, data collection processes, definitions of measures, Notice of Grant Opportunity information, State Policies, Contract requirements and on assessment administration. Therefore, part of the program's data collection process must include training of all data collection staff

on their roles and responsibilities, as well as the importance of data collection. Teachers should also have a basic understanding of data reporting requirements. NJ LWD Title II staff will facilitate training in regards to NRS policies, definitions of measures, and overall assessment best practices annually.

In addition, the State contracts with LiteracyPro to provide several levels and types of LACES training each program year, including “How well do you know WIOA?” and LACES Targeted Training focused on, and specific to each agency’s/program’s strengths and weaknesses and technical assistance.

All new staff must be trained within 14 business days from their initial start date. Lead agencies are required to keep track of new staff training needs including dates/times provided for NJ LWD Title II staff review at any time during the program year. Technical assistance is available by completing the LACES User News page *Technical Support Form*, or via email at helpdesk@literacypro.com or by phone at 888-714-9464.

4. Clear and Timely Data Entry Procedures

Program procedures for data entry should specify at least one person whose job is to enter the information from forms into LACES. All staff members should know this person’s role and he or she should have the authority to request clarification or resolution of errors. In addition, data entry should be scheduled at frequent, regular intervals – such as daily, weekly, or bi-weekly. All data should be collected and entered *at least* on a bi-weekly basis, with no more than a two-week delay between actual activity and activity reported in LACES. Without frequent data entry, not only will there be a backlog of forms to enter, but programs may not become aware of errors and missing data until it is too late to correct them. Part of the data entry procedure should also include a prompt, organized way to identify and resolve errors.

SECTION III: GUIDELINES FOR EACH ASSESSMENT

A Brief Description of each Approved Assessment is provided in this Section.

A. Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)

The CASAS Reading GOALS series is aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and covers the full range of ability levels in the Standards, from beginning literacy through adult secondary. Reading GOALS measures the rigorous academic vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills contained in the Standards. Test questions are relevant to the everyday lives of adult learners and contain a balance of life skills and employment-related content. The delivery formats available are Web-Based Testing (CASAS eTests Online HTML5) and Test Booklets. The test takes between 60 and 75 minutes to complete.

The CASAS Math GOALS series is aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and covers all NRS math levels. This series is appropriate for math skills in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation programs. Questions draw on higher order skills involving basic and advanced operations, statistics and

probability, geometry, and other fields of math. Test questions contain a balance of life skills and employment-related content. This math series assists to identify the rigorous academic and everyday math skills that students need as they prepare to function productively in today's society, transition to postsecondary education and training, and achieve success in the workplace. The delivery formats available are Web-Based Testing (CASAS eTests Online HTML5) and Test Booklets. The test takes between 60 and 75 minutes to complete.

The CASAS Reading Life and Work assessment is a reading comprehension series. This competency-based series helps to identify the reading skills students need as programs prepare them to function successfully in today's society. The test measures all NRS levels. The content is a balance of life skills and employment-related content. The delivery formats available are Web-Based (CASAS eTests Online), Computer-Based (CASAS eTests Desktop), and Test Booklets. Students have up to one hour to complete the test.

The CASAS Reading for Citizenship is a test series designed to motivate beginning readers to improve their citizenship-focused reading skills. This test assesses reading comprehension for low beginning English language students. Forms 951 and 952 are at a CASAS Level A. Forms 951X and 952X are "bridge" tests between Level A and Level B. Students have up to one hour to complete their test. The test results help guide citizenship instructors in curriculum development and lesson planning. CASAS citizenship tests are in line with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) citizenship interview process and USCIS requirements that require applicants to "be able to read, write, and speak English and have knowledge and an understanding of U.S. history and government (civics)." The delivery formats available are Web-Based (CASAS eTests Online), Computer-Based (CASAS eTests Desktop), or Audio CD (with questions) and Test Booklets (with answer choices).

The CASAS Reading for Language Arts-Secondary Level assessment identifies the high school content area(s) that students need to succeed at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The test is a Level D assessment (adult secondary level). There are 40 test items and students have up to one hour to complete their test. The delivery formats available are Web-Based (CASAS eTests Online), Computer-Based (CASAS eTests Desktop), and Test Booklets.

The CASAS Listening Life and Work assessment (LW Listening) is a listening comprehension series. The test takes between 40 and 50 minutes to complete. This series help to identify the listening skills that English language students need as programs prepare them to function successfully in society. There is a balance of life skills and employment-related content. The delivery formats available are CASAS eTest Online, CASAS eTest Desktop, and Audio CD. The test requires the students to listen and to records their responses either on the computer or an answer sheet.

1. Locator/Appraisal

CASAS eTests (computerized testing) administers a short locator test that automatically transitions students into the correct pretest option. Agencies that use CASAS eTests Online for testing should use the Form 104R Reading GOALS Locator test and the Form 104M Math GOALS Locator test. The

Reading GOALS and Math GOALS Series' Locator tests are typically 15 minutes each. The Reading GOALS Series Locator has 12 test items and the Math GOALS Series Locator has 10 test items.

CASAS provides appraisals for paper test booklets. An appraisal test ensures that adult learners start with the appropriate assessment level. An Appraisal test is typically 30-40 minutes. The Form 900R Reading GOALS Appraisal is the **only appraisal** appropriate for use with the paper-based pre- and post-tests in the Reading GOALS series. The Form 900R Reading GOALS Appraisal is a 30-minute test with 28 questions. The Form 900M Math GOALS Appraisal is the **only appraisal** appropriate for use with paper-based pre- and post-tests in the Math GOALS series. The Form 900M Math GOALS Appraisal is a 30-minute test with 20 questions.

2. Parallel Forms

Different forms must be used for pre- and post-testing. Please find detailed information below regarding CASAS approved forms.

- **Reading GOALS Series** – Level A (forms 901R - 902R) – 39 questions/60 minutes, Level B (forms 903R – 904R) – 40 questions/75 minutes, Level C (forms 905R – 906R) – 40 questions/75 minutes, Level D (forms 907R – 908R) – 40 questions/75 minutes, are approved for use for **ABE** students.
- **Math GOALS Series** – Level A/B (Form 913) – 40 test items/up to 60 minutes, Level A/B (Form 914) – 40 test items/up to 60 minutes, Level C/D (Form 917) – 38 test items/up to 75 minutes, Level C/D (Form 918) – 38 test items/up to 75 minutes, are approved for use for **ABE** students.
- **Reading Assessments (Life and Work, Life Skills, Reading for Citizenship, Reading for Language Arts-Secondary Level)** – forms 27, 28, 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, 188, 310, 311, 513, 514, 951, 952, 951X, and 952X are approved for use **for ELA students**.
- **Listening Assessment Life and Work (LW Listening)** – forms 981L, 982L, 983L, 984L, 985L, and 986L are approved for use **for ELA students**.

3. Minimum Hours between Pre- and Post-test

Post-testing should occur after a minimum of 40 hours of instruction.

In rare and limited cases, students may be tested after 30 hours of instruction.

Please see Section II Post-Testing on page 8, for detail regarding the post-testing exception.

4. Test Administrator Training

Each person who gives, scores, or orders CASAS assessments must complete *Initial Implementation Training*. CASAS offers self-paced Implementation Training at no cost. The local program is responsible for maintaining a record of all staff trained to administer CASAS.

5. CASAS Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Assessment accommodations provide students who have disabilities with an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities without interference caused by the disability itself. Accommodations change the way an assessment is administered or how students may respond to the assessment situation.

Appropriate accommodations meet students' needs without changing what a test is intended to measure. It is important to note that not all students with disabilities will need testing accommodations.

The accountability standards in the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) include the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. WIOA, effective July 2015, focuses on students most in need, such as students with a low level of literacy skills, English language learners, and those with disabilities. Other legislation addresses provisions related to testing accommodations for students with disabilities, including ADA Amendments of 2008, Section 504 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

Local agencies are responsible for providing fully accessible services and reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. The need to use an accommodation should be documented in official student records. The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the student's ability to demonstrate performance on the test. The information can come from a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, and other clinical records. Programs can often contact the local division of vocational rehabilitation or a secondary school to request documentation of a disability.

For students with documented disabilities, local assessment staff may provide accommodations in administration procedures, such as allowing extra time, repeating directions, breaking an assessment into two sessions, using a separate room, giving frequent breaks, or providing a sign language interpreter (for test administration directions only). Accommodations in student response may include using a sound amplification device, using a reader and scribe to record answers, using a simple calculator for math, typing on a Braille keyboard, and using speech-to-text software. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the test publisher directly.

6. Administering and Scoring CASAS

All CASAS tests - Post-tests are administered at the same level or higher, depending on the student's pre-test score. The test publisher recommends an alternate test form within the same test series for post-testing. Additionally, the post-test must be in the same skill area as the pre-test.

Reading GOALS Series - Students who score in the low-end range marked with an asterisk (*) do not receive a scale score. Those who score in the low-end range of a Level B, C, or D test should take the next lower test form for a scale score and NRS level. If a student scores at the low-end range on a Level A test, CASAS suggests additional instruction before retesting the student on a Level A test.

Students who score in the high-end conservative-estimate range marked with a diamond (♦) on a pretest should retest at the next highest level. Students who score at the high conservative estimate/diamond range on a post-test also should retest at the next highest level. If it is not possible to administer another post-test because the semester is over or the student is unavailable, programs may use the post-test score, even if it falls within the estimate/diamond range.

Levels B, C, and D do not give a scale score until item 11 to ensure that students answer enough questions to assess their reading level reliably.

**ABE NRS Educational Functioning Levels
CASAS Reading GOALS Series Scale Score Ranges**

NRS ABE Level	Reading Goal 900 Series Scale Score Ranges
ABE Level 1	203 and below
ABE Level 2	204-216
ABE Level 3	217-227
ABE Level 4	228-238
ABE Level 5	239-248
ABE Level 6	249 and above

Math GOALS Series – Students may use a calculator throughout the entire math test. CASAS eTests provides an on-screen calculator, while programs that use paper-based tests should provide students with a basic calculator (not a graphing calculator). Students may not use a personal calculator nor their cell phone calculator.

Students who score in the low-end range marked with an asterisk (*) do not receive a scale score. If a student scores in the low-end range of a Level A/B test, CASAS suggests additional instruction before retesting the student on the alternate Level A/B test form. If a student scores at the low-end range on a Level C/D test, they should take the Level A/B test form to obtain a scale score and NRS level.

Students who score in the high-end conservative-estimate range marked with a diamond (♦) on an A/B pretest form should retest at the next highest level. Students who score at the high conservative estimate/diamond range on an A/B post-test also should retest at the next highest level. If it is not possible to administer another post-test because the semester is over or the student is unavailable, programs may use the post-test score, even if it falls within the conservative estimate/diamond range.

Level A/B tests do not give a scale score until item 5. Level C/D tests do not give a scale score until item 11. This is to ensure that students answer enough questions to assess their math level reliably.

**ABE NRS Educational Functioning Levels
CASAS Math GOALS Series Scale Score Ranges**

NRS ABE Level	Math Goal 900 Series Scale Score Ranges
ABE Level 1	193 and below
ABE Level 2	194-203
ABE Level 3	204-214
ABE Level 4	215-225
ABE Level 5	226-235
ABE Level 6	236 and above

Reading Life and Work/Listening Life and Work (980 Series)

In the Reading Life and Work assessment there are 4 levels of pre- and post-tests, from Level A (beginning literacy) to Level D (adult secondary).

In the Listening Life and Work (980 Series) assessment there are three levels of pre- and post-tests, from Level A (beginning ESL literacy) to Level C (advanced ESL). The Audio CD format requires students to listen and to record their responses on an answer sheet. Level A uses a picture prompt booklet for one section of the test. Levels B and C have no test booklets.

**ESL NRS Educational Functioning Levels
CASAS Reading Life and Work/Listening Life and Work Series
Scale Score Ranges**

NRS ESL Level	Reading Life & Work Series Scale Score Ranges	Listening Life & Work (980 Series) Scale Score Ranges
ESL Level 1	180 and below	180 and below
ESL Level 2	181-190	181-189
ESL Level 3	191-200	190-199
ESL Level 4	201-210	200-209
ESL Level 5	211-220	210-218
ESL Level 6	221-235	219-227
Exit Advanced ESL	236 and above	228 and above

B. TABE Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS-E)

TABE CLAS-E provides teachers with a reliable, easy-to-use system that accurately identifies the instructional needs of English Language Acquisition (ELA) students. TABE CLAS-E assesses English proficiency levels to accurately measure students reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The optional speaking test gives teachers maximum flexibility in how they assess their students. The test formats include multiple-choice and constructed-response items that address a wide range of language skills. Test items include realistic illustrations, contextualized reading passages, and contexts encountered at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

1. TABE CLAS-E Locator

A short locator should be given to ensure that ELA students start with the appropriate assessment level. The Locator Test includes an oral interview and additional multiple-choice items representative of the skill areas assessed in the four test levels. The locator should *not* be used for instructional placement decisions about a student.

2. Parallel Forms

Pre- and post-tests are available at four levels to ensure that students test within the correct range for their abilities. TABE CLAS-E has two parallel forms, Forms A and B which must be used alternately to ensure valid results when re-testing the same student. A different form from that of the pre-test should be administered as a post-test. Programs may also select the next level higher test.

3. Minimum Hours between Pre- and Post-test

Post-testing is recommended after 50-60 hours of instruction with a *minimum* of 40 hours.

In rare and limited cases, students may be tested after 30 hours of instruction.

Please see Section II E4 Post-Testing on page 7, for detail regarding the post-testing exception.

4. Test Administrator Training

All staff administering the TABE CLAS-E must be trained before administering the test. The local program is responsible for maintaining a record of all staff trained to administer the TABE CLAS-E.

5. TABE CLAS-E Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The purposes of modern educational assessment now extend beyond examinee-to-examinee comparisons under uniform conditions, and the inclusion of all examinees in educational assessment has become highly valued and required by law. TABE CLAS-E publisher, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) advocates and has adopted an approach to standardization that recognizes inclusiveness and accommodation as equally important, non-conflicting characteristics of modern assessment practice. DRC's guidelines for inclusive test administration are intended to facilitate the valid interpretation of

individual examinee results and valid comparisons of year-to-year and group-to-group summary data. They do not address the entire range of issues that must be considered when testing examinees who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs).

TABE CLAS-E provides large-print editions to accommodate students with special needs:

- Large-Print Edition Locator Test
- Large-Print Edition Language Proficiency Tests, Forms A and B
- Expository Writing Folios are incorporated in Large-Print Edition Test Books

Additional information can be obtained by contacting the test publisher directly or at [TABE Guidelines to Inclusive Testing Accommodations](#).

6. Administering and Scoring the TABE CLAS-E

TABE CLAS-E delivers number correct and scale scores for each skill area. The Reading (25 minutes), Listening (20 minutes) and Writing (47 minutes) skill areas consist of 75 items and take approximately 92 minutes. The optional Speaking skill area is administered individually and consists of 16 items and takes approximately 15 minutes per student.

Program staff must convert the number correct to the scale score for each sub-test and enter a scale score into LACES. Examiners can automatically scan, score, and report results quickly and accurately. Tests can also be scored manually by using stencils, the Scoring Tables book and the Individual Diagnostic Profile.

Please note that a student can only achieve an NRS ESL Level 6 on a TABE CLAS-E Level 4 test. The language demands in lower level TABE CLAS-E tests are not sufficiently difficult to reach the “Advanced ESL” (NRS ESL Level 6) functioning level. If a student scores at NRS Level 6 upon the first administration of the TABE CLAS-E Level 4 test, but has not reached the exit score, the student may still show gain if they meet the exit criteria on a second administration. However, if the student scores at the exit criterion or above on the first administration, a higher NRS ESL level cannot be obtained on the second administration. In such cases, a different ESL assessment *or* an ABE assessment should be given.

ESL NRS Educational Functioning Levels and TABE CLAS-E

NRS ESL Level	TABE CLAS-E Score Range
ESL Level 1	Total Reading and Writing 225-394 Total Listening and Speaking 230-407
ESL Level 2	Total Reading and Writing 395-441 Total Listening and Speaking 408-449
ESL Level 3	Total Reading and Writing 442-482 Total Listening and Speaking 450-485
ESL Level 4	Total Reading and Writing 483-514 Total Listening and Speaking 486-525
ESL Level 5	Total Reading and Writing 515-556 Total Listening and Speaking 526-558
ESL Level 6	Total Reading and Writing 557-600 Total Listening and Speaking 559-600

C. Basic English Skills Test (BEST Plus 2.0)

The BEST Plus 2.0 is an individually administered face-to-face adaptive oral interview designed to assess the English proficiency of adult English language learners (ELLs) that measures the full range of proficiency levels represented in adult education programs. It is intended to assess interpersonal communication using everyday language used in practical situations. Test items reflect language used in everyday life in the U.S. – at home, at work, and in the community.

BEST Plus 2.0 is a combined test of listening and speaking skills and is available in two formats: computer adaptive and semi-adaptive print based.

1. BEST Plus 2.0 Locator

- A. In the semi-adaptive print-based version of the BEST Plus 2.0, a quick locator test determines the level of the test form for the examinee. The BEST Plus 2.0 print version includes examinee test booklets (forms D, E, and F) and corresponding picture cue books.
- B. In the computer-adaptive version of BEST Plus 2.0, computer software selects test items appropriate to the examinee's ability after the locator items have been administered. The BEST Plus 2.0 software is available on USB, which includes the test administration software, score management guide, test transfer program, and practice software.

2. Parallel Forms

The print-based version has three parallel forms (D, E, and F) for pre- and post-testing purposes. Different forms must be used for pre- and post-testing.

3. Minimum Hours between Pre- and Post-test

Post-testing is recommended after 80-100 hours of instruction with a *minimum* of 60 hours.

4. Test Administrator Training

CAL requires test administrators to complete a six-hour training with a CAL-certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainer and be approved by that trainer to begin administering BEST Plus 2.0. CAL recommends annual refresher training. The local program is responsible for maintaining a record of all certified staff trained to administer the BEST Plus 2.0.

5. BEST Plus 2.0 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other related federal, state, and local laws were enacted to guarantee equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, including those in educational programs. Programs administering BEST Plus 2.0 are responsible for providing accessible services and for ensuring that requests for accommodations are considered and handled in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Programs and test administrators may provide and allow accommodations in test administration procedures or in the testing environment for individuals with disabilities, provided that the accommodations do not compromise the purpose or results of the test.

The test administrator cannot show the prompts on the screen or in the test booklet to a person with a hearing impairment nor may a sign language interpreter be used. A permissible accommodation for BEST Plus 2.0 would be the use of hearing aids.

Likewise, a test administrator cannot explain the content of a picture cue prompt to a person with a visual impairment. An appropriate accommodation would be the use of a magnifying glass to enlarge the image. BEST Plus 2.0 is not appropriate for use with individuals whose visual impairment prevents them from seeing the picture cue prompts even when enlarged or otherwise enhanced. Skipping picture questions is not a reasonable accommodation for individuals with visual impairments.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting the test publisher directly.

6. Administering and Scoring the BEST Plus 2.0

BEST Plus 2.0 is administered face-to-face for both the computer-adaptive version and the semi-adaptive print-based version. The BEST Plus 2.0 takes 5-20 minutes to administer with an average of 6 to 8 minutes depending on the examinee's level of oral proficiency. Higher proficiency speakers usually take longer than speakers with lower proficiency because they are asked more questions and their responses tend to be longer and more complex.

Informative score reports are generated for both the computer and print-based versions using the BEST Plus 2.0 Score Management Software (SMS). The software allows management of the data that reside in the secure, password-protected database used in the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administration Program. The BEST Plus 2.0 Scores Database stores all data associated with test administrations.

The semi-adaptive print-based version does not require a computer at the time of testing, however at least one computer must be available at the time of scoring in order to convert the raw scores from the test booklets into reportable scale scores using the score management software.

ESL NRS Educational Functioning Levels and BEST Plus 2.0

NRS ESL Level	BEST Plus 2.0 Score Range
ESL Level 1	88-361
ESL Level 2	362-427
ESL Level 3	428-452
ESL Level 4	453-484
ESL Level 5	485-524
ESL Level 6	525-564 (exit 565 and higher)

D. Basic English Skills Test (BEST Literacy)

The BEST Literacy is a measurement tool designed to assess reading and writing skills in authentic situations specifically geared for English language learners (ELLs) in the United States. Reading tasks include reading dates on a calendar, labels on food and clothing, bulletin announcements, and newspaper want ads. Writing tasks include addressing an envelope, writing a rent check, filling out a personal background form, and writing personal notes.

1. Locator

The BEST Literacy assessment *does not* provide or require a locator test although some adults entering an ELA program may have limited knowledge of written English and will struggle with or be unable to complete a literacy assessment such as BEST Literacy.

2. Parallel Forms

BEST Literacy is available in three parallel forms (B, C, and D) for pre- and post-testing. Use of different forms for pre-testing and post-testing is required.

3. Minimum Hours between Pre- and Post-test

Post-testing is recommended after 80-100 hours of instruction with a *minimum* of 60 hours.

4. Test Administrator Training

To ensure the accurate use and scoring of BEST Literacy as a standardized assessment, all test administrators should read and follow the instructions in the *BEST Literacy Test Manual* (2008). The

local program is responsible for maintaining a record of all staff trained to administer the BEST Literacy.

5. BEST Literacy Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other related federal, state, and local laws were enacted to guarantee equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, including those in educational programs. Programs administering the BEST Literacy are responsible for providing accessible service and for ensuring that requests for accommodations are considered and handled in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Program and test administrators may provide and allow accommodations in test administration procedures or in the testing environment for individuals with disabilities, provided that the accommodations do not compromise the purpose or results of the test.

Permissible accommodations related to test administration procedures for BEST Literacy include the use of eyeglasses or magnifying glasses, earplugs, color overlays or rulers. Testing environment accommodations might include frequent breaks or individual administration.

It is not an appropriate accommodation for someone to read the test questions to an examinee with sight impairment, as BEST Literacy is a test of reading, not listening.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting the test publisher directly.

6. Administering and Scoring the BEST Literacy

BEST Literacy can be administered individually or to groups of students in one hour or less. Students can be placed into ESL Level 6 using BEST Literacy but the test does not assess skills beyond this level so students cannot exit Advanced ESL with this test. Retesting of students who enter this level with another assessment is recommended.

ESL NRS Educational Functioning Levels and BEST Literacy

NRS ESL Level	BEST Literacy Score Range
ESL Level 1	0-20 (SPL* 0-1)
ESL Level 2	21-52 (SPL 2)
ESL Level 3	56-63 (SPL 3)
ESL Level 4	64-67 (SPL 4)
ESL Level 5	68-75 (SPL 5)
ESL Level 6	76-78 (SPL 6)

* Student Performance Level (SPL)

SECTION IV: ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A. Overview of assessment exemptions

Local programs unable to administer an NRS-approved test to a distance learning student due to the widespread effect of the COVID-19 pandemic may exempt that student from testing. Local programs that exempt students from NRS tests should put procedures in place to identify students who were not tested due to an inability to conduct testing, so that the impact of COVID-19 outbreak can be appropriately tracked.

Local programs must administer NRS-approved pre-tests as soon as feasible. A student cannot achieve an educational functioning level (EFL) gain without an NRS pre and post-test. Providers may elect to use virtual testing for distance learning participants where a test publisher has procedures in place to allow virtual proctoring. The option to administer an NRS-approved test virtually is not limited to the pandemic. Local programs may implement virtual test proctoring using the assessments identified in this policy, in accordance with the test publisher's procedures for virtual testing.

B. Enrolling students in adult education programs without an NRS-approved pre-test

Local programs can enroll new students in distance education programs without administering an NRS-approved *pre-test*. They still must determine if students are eligible for AEFLA services. Local programs should administer an NRS-approved pre-test through in-person testing or remote proctoring as soon as is feasible and then adjust the initial provisional EFL placement based on the pre-test score.

Informal or non-NRS approved assessment methods to provisionally assign an EFL for the purpose of placing students into a level on the NRS tables should be used only when an approved NRS test cannot be administered. The results of these informal assessments must be entered into LACES in order for these students to count toward a local program's contracted level of service.

Local programs may consider a number of options for EFL placement of students that are unable to be assessed with an NRS-approved assessment either through remote proctoring or in-person administration. This can include informal content-driven or performance-driven assessments such as locator tests (e.g. Aztec locator), criterion referenced tests or authentic assessments. Criterion referenced tests compare a student's knowledge or skills against a predetermined standard, learning goal, performance level, or other criterion. With criterion referenced tests, each student's performance is compared directly to the standard, without consideration for how other students perform on the test. Authentic assessments require assessing what students can apply to a real world situation. This demands the judgment to determine what information and skills are relevant and how they should be used. Authentic assessments use an approach to measure student performance in a direct, relevant way.

C. Post-testing exemption for previously enrolled students in adult education programs

Local programs are allowed to exempt students previously enrolled in distance education programs *from post-testing* during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The grantee should administer an NRS-approved post-test through in-person testing or remote proctoring, if applicable, as soon as is feasible.*

D. Measureable Skill Gains (MSG)

In the case of pre and post-testing, a student **cannot** achieve an MSG if the student's EFL placement was provisionally assigned using an informal assessment method. An MSG can only be achieved if the provisionally assigned EFL is later adjusted based on an NRS-approved pre-test score. The student may, however, achieve an MSG with a provisionally assigned EFL by: (1) attaining a secondary school diploma (SSD) or its recognized equivalent if their EFL placement was at the 9th grade level or above or they are receiving instruction at the 9th grade level or above as indicated in LACES; or (2) by exiting the adult education program and enrolling in postsecondary education.