



Adult Learner Assessment

*Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education
Division of Adult Education Policy*

Subject: **Adult Learner Assessment**
Number: D.100
Effective: July 1, 2019
Expires: Indefinite
Status: Replaces D.100 issued July 1, 2018

POLICY STATEMENT

All division-funded programs, including distance education programs, must follow established procedures for (1) selecting appropriate assessment instruments, (2) assessment training, (3) administering assessments, and (4) reporting assessment results.

PURPOSE

Proper assessment provides instructional staff with information on specific learner educational needs. In addition, proper assessment administration ensures Pennsylvania's success in meeting and exceeding the National Reporting System (NRS) target for measurable skill gain by learners.

GUIDANCE: Appropriate Assessment Instruments

The following are the current division-approved standardized assessments for reporting individual learner gains:

Adult Basic Education Levels 1-4; Adult Secondary Education Levels 5-6

Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE): Forms 11 and 12, paper or computer-based non-adaptive, Reading, Language, and Math

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading GOALS: Forms 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, and 908, paper or computer-based

CASAS Math GOALS: Forms 900, 913, 914, 917, and 918, paper or computer-based

English as a Second Language Levels 1-6

Basic English Skills Test (BEST): BEST Literacy Forms B, C, and D, paper

BEST Plus 2.0: Forms D, E, and F, paper or computer-adaptive

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Life and Work: paper or computer-based non-adaptive

- Reading – Forms 27, 28, 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, and 188
- Listening – Forms 981L, 982L, 983L, 984L, 985L, and 986L

Note: Neither the GED Ready™ or HiSET® Official Practice Test nor the Official GED® Test or the HiSET® Exam are approved as standardized assessments for educational functioning level (EFL) placement.

GUIDANCE: Selecting Assessments for Appropriate Learner Populations

Programs should select the appropriate standardized assessment(s) for each learner based on the characteristics of the learner (including needs, abilities, EFL, and goals). Table 1 (refer to Tools section below) provides suggested approved standardized assessments for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE)/Adult Secondary Education (ASE) learner populations at each EFL. The division issues the following guidance to ensure that learners are being tracked with the most appropriate approved standardized assessment:

BEST Literacy

1. BEST Literacy is NRS-approved to place learners in ESL EFLs.
2. The NRS has no exit criteria for Advanced ESL based on BEST Literacy, so learners assessed with BEST Literacy that place into Advanced ESL cannot demonstrate completion of Advanced ESL. Therefore, BEST Literacy **should not be used** with Advanced ESL learners. Learners that place into High Intermediate ESL based on BEST Literacy should be transitioned to an assessment for higher-level ESL learners (CASAS or BEST Plus). This may be done immediately or after a matching follow-up BEST Literacy has been given, at the program's discretion.

BEST Plus 2.0

1. BEST Plus 2.0 is NRS-approved to place learners in ESL EFLs. This assessment is scored through the Advanced ESL NRS Level.
2. Programs may use either the print form or the computer-assisted form, but they should not initially assess with a print form and give a second administration with the computer-assisted form, or vice versa.
3. Instructors must not administer the BEST Plus 2.0 to their own learners.
4. A score from BEST Plus 2.0 cannot be matched with one from BEST Literacy.

TABE

1. TABE is NRS-approved to place learners in ABE/ASE EFLs.
2. Effective July 1, 2019, TABE 9/10 is no longer approved. TABE 9/10 assessments may not be rolled over into Program Year (PY) 2019-20.
3. TABE is not NRS-approved to place learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) EFLs. Non-native speakers of English who are working on goals where progress related to instruction would be captured appropriately by TABE (e.g., preparing to take the HiSET®/GED® tests or improving academic English skills for advancement to postsecondary education) can be assessed with TABE.
4. Care should be taken to use appropriate levels of the test. Refer to **Table 1** in the Tools section below.
5. A higher level posttest can be administered if the learner showed extraordinary progress in class.

CASAS

1. CASAS Reading GOALS and Math GOALS are NRS-approved to place learners in ABE/ASE EFLs.
2. Effective July 1, 2019, CASAS Life Skills and Life and Work Reading are no longer approved for ABE/ASE and may not be rolled over into PY 2019-20 for ABE/ASE.
3. CASAS Life and Work Listening and Reading continue to be NRS-approved to place learners in ESL EFLs. Forms 27 and 28 may be particularly appropriate assessments for the lowest level ESL learners.

Caution: Programs may purchase informal “progress” assessments from test publishers but should not mistake these for state-approved assessments.

Assessment Extensions: CASAS Life and Work Listening (980 series), CASAS Life and Work Reading, BEST Plus 2.0, and BEST Literacy assessments are approved for use for ESL through February 2, 2021.

Special Needs Learners: Documented special needs learners are not required to be tested with a division-approved assessment but must be assessed using an alternative assessment (See Policy D.120 Special Needs). Special Needs learners will be assigned to the lowest EFL - Beginning Adult Basic Education Literacy. Because these learners are not given a division-approved assessment, they cannot achieve an EFL gain.

GUIDANCE: Assessment Training

To ensure sound assessment procedures and accurate data, all staff members who administer assessments must complete division-approved training through the professional development system (PDS) or the assessment publisher. Assessment staff must periodically repeat the courses to ensure compliance with test administration procedures. Only properly trained staff are permitted to administer assessments. Programs should ensure that they have the most up-to-date version of the test administration manual for the assessment(s) used and that staff read and follow the test administration procedures. Programs should regularly review appropriate test administration procedures.

Training

TABE

New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS TABE training course. After successfully completing the training, participants must successfully administer and score three learner assessments under the supervision of a qualified assessor before independently administering an assessment. All TABE-trained staff must complete the TABE course every three years.

CASAS

New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS CASAS training course before administering the CASAS assessments. All CASAS-trained staff must complete the CASAS course every two years.

BEST Literacy

New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS initial training course as soon as possible. All BEST Literacy-trained staff must take the course as a refresher every three years.

BEST Plus 2.0

As required by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), all BEST Plus 2.0 administrators must attend a six-contact-hour training workshop conducted by a certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainer before they may begin testing. After initial certification by CAL, Best Plus 2.0 administrators are required by the Division of Adult Education to annually complete the scoring refresher course offered by the PDS. Completion of the scoring refresher course and continued approval to administer the BEST Plus 2.0 are contingent on the administrator's ability to demonstrate reliable, accurate, and valid scoring during the scoring refresher course. BEST Plus 2.0 administrators who fail to meet these criteria must stop administering the BEST Plus until they successfully complete the course. BEST Plus 2.0 assessments administered by individuals who do not meet these training criteria will be considered invalid.

GUIDANCE: Assessment Administration

All programs must have written assessment policy and procedures which ensure the following:

- a. Criteria for determining the most appropriate standardized assessment(s) for each learner;
- b. Completion of required assessment training by test administration staff;
- c. First assessment administration procedures;
- d. Use of appropriate accommodations as allowed by publisher guidelines;
- e. Informal assessment of learners' other needs and goals; and
- f. Second assessment administration (posttesting) procedures.

First Assessment Administration: All programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all learners, including learners in distance education, are given an initial approved assessment before beginning instruction. This includes the use of the appraisal or locator when using the CASAS, BEST Plus 2.0, and TABE 11/12 to determine the correct level of the assessment to be administered. It is essential that learners be assessed prior to receiving instruction to ensure that instructors have diagnostic information about the learners' educational needs.

Assessment Accommodations: Learners with special needs of a sensory, orthopedic, cognitive, or psychiatric nature can be assessed using standardized instruments if the program feels they can show gains when given accommodations. To meet the unique needs of these adults, alternate approaches to standardized assessment practices may be appropriate and authorized. For example, TABE offers large print and Braille versions and audio tapes for the visually impaired. Refer to assessment publisher guidelines for more information.

Informal Assessments: The use of informal assessment is encouraged to enhance academic placement and planning. Informal assessments cannot be used as a substitute for the required standardized assessments. Results from informal assessments will not be entered into e-Data v2, will not count toward program performance standards, and should be kept in program records.

Note: Programs may use the GED Ready™ Official Practice Test or the HiSET® Official Practice Test as an informal assessment to ensure that learners are prepared to take the respective high school equivalency tests. These tests cannot replace the approved standardized tests used for reporting purposes.

Second Assessment Administration (posttest): Programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all learners, including learners in distance education, have a minimum of two administrations of at least one assessment with different but equivalent forms of the same instrument. Pairing two different instruments (e.g., a TABE reading and a TABE math or a CASAS Reading GOALS and a CASAS Math GOALS) cannot be used to determine educational

gain. TABE and CASAS computer-based (non-adaptive) tests are identical to their paper-based versions. It is permissible to pretest with a paper-based test and posttest with the correct alternate form of the computer-based test and vice versa. Learners that persist in their instruction should be assessed multiple times during a program year, as appropriate.

Recommended Timeframes: Publishers of the approved standardized assessments have recommended timeframes for follow-up administrations for all learners, including learners in distance education. Programs must provide administration of the assessments in accordance with the timeframes recommended by the respective publishers. Refer to **Table 2** in the Tools section below.

Programs have the option of posttesting outside the recommended timeframes under certain reasonable circumstances. For example, a learner that is being released from prison or anticipates an extended leave of absence may be posttested before the recommended timeframe if the learner has enough hours to have a reasonable chance to achieve an educational level gain.

Another example is a learner who was assessed with the TABE and placed at NRS level 4 (High Intermediate ABE) who has 55 hours of instruction, exits with no posttest, and returns after an absence of 90 days. In this case, the program does not have to posttest the learner within five hours of his returning to the program. It is best practice to allow the learner some additional instruction time before attempting a posttest and place a note to that effect in the learner file.

Note: Programs that assess a learner outside a test publisher’s recommended timeframe must document the reason in the learner file.

Periods of Participation: Regardless of the number of periods of participation for a learner, the programs should adhere to the test publisher’s recommended posttesting timeframes.

Expired Assessments: During a program year, if a learner does not receive instruction for 150 days or more, prior assessments are no longer valid, and the learner must be reassessed. For TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus 2.0, the locator/appraisal must be administered to determine the testing level. Programs must use the alternate level form booklet from the one used during the last assessment administration.

GUIDANCE: Reporting Assessment Results

Reporting Assessment Results: Each program must have written procedures that ensure sound collection and reporting of standardized assessment data. These procedures should have steps to ensure that all assessments are:

- Administered according to published guidelines;
- Scored correctly;
- Recorded completely and accurately by assessor; and
- Entered accurately into e-Data v2.

Once eData is open, all programs are required to enter all standardized assessments in eData v2 within 14 days of test administration.

Entering Assessments: Programs must enter all subject area assessments administered to a learner into the e-Data v2 system. An exception to this requirement is for learners who are

assessed in multiple subject areas but want to focus their instruction on a single content area (e.g., reading) that is not associated with the lowest EFL. In this example, the assessment for the subject area the learner is working on is the only assessment entered into e-Data v2. A note explaining the reason must be included in the learner's file.

Rollover Assessments: Learners continuing with the program into the next program year or served by another program in a previous year must have their adult record rolled over in the e-Data v2 system. As part of the adult record, the assessment for these learners may be rolled over if appropriate for the learner's course of study in the new program year. The rollover assessments must be approved for the current program year and dated within 150 days of the learner's first period of participation enrollment date to appear on the rollover screen.

Determining Educational Gain: The e-Data v2 system allows entry of multiple administrations of multiple assessments. However, per Division of Adult Education policy, e-Data v2 will automatically select the lowest EFL first administration subtest as the learner entry level. Scores entered in e-Data v2 for follow-up administrations will determine an exit level for learners. The difference between entry level and exit level will determine educational gain, defined as completion of an EFL. The EFL gain result for the lowest first administration will be used for agency performance purposes. Any EFL gain will be used for NRS reporting purposes. [Test Benchmarks for NRS Educational Functioning Levels.](#)

TOOLS

Table 1: Selection of Appropriate Assessment Instruments for ESL and ABE/ASE Learner Populations at Different NRS Functioning Levels

Approximate NRS EFL	Beginning ABE Literacy/ Beginning Basic Education	Low Intermediate Basic Education/ High Intermediate Basic Education	Low Adult Secondary Education/ High Adult Secondary Education	Beginning ESL Literacy/ Low Beginning ESL/ High Beginning ESL/ Low Intermediate ESL	High Intermediate ESL/ Advanced ESL
BEST Literacy	No	No	No	Yes	No
BEST Plus 2.0	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
CASAS Life and Work	No	No	No	Yes Reading, Listening	Yes Reading, Listening
CASAS Reading GOALS	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
CASAS Math GOALS	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
TABE 11/12	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Table 2: Publishers’ Recommended Timeframes for Posttesting

Note: These recommended timeframes are considered the ideal; however, programs may need to adjust these timeframes to meet learner needs.

Approved Assessments	Recommended Timeframes
BEST Literacy BEST Plus 2.0	60 hours minimum; 80-100 hours recommended
CASAS Life and Work CASAS Reading GOALS CASAS Math GOALS	40 hours minimum; 70-100 hours recommended
TABE 11/12 Alternate Form NRS Levels 1-4 (ABE)	50-60 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 11M to 12M) for learners with a minimum of 40 hours
TABE 11/12 Alternate Form NRS Levels 5-6 (ASE)	30-59 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e. 11M to 12M)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[C.100 Adult Education and Family Literacy Performance Standards](#)

This policy explains the criteria for reportable individual and participant, defines exit criteria, and identifies program performance standards for adult basic and family literacy programs.

[C.130 Verifying and Reporting Data](#)

This policy includes information on requirements for NRS training for program staff and requirements and guidance for accurate and timely data collection and entry.

[C.135 Cohorts for the Primary Indicators of Performance](#)

This policy includes information on federal and state NRS performance indicator cohorts.

[Test Benchmarks for NRS Educational Functioning Levels](#)

This document provides the scale score ranges for the NRS EFLs.

[D.130 Distance Learning Policy](#)

This policy establishes agency responsibilities for assessing learners in distance education.

[eData v2 Manual and Glossary](#)

This document provides definitions of required and optional data elements and directions for entering data in the eData v2 system.