



ABE/ESL STANDARDIZED TESTING POLICY

Program Year 2019-2020

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Introduction and Overview for South Dakota

IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENT

The passage of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act in 1998 placed a focus on the development and implementation of an accountability system for Adult Education. As a result, the National Reporting System (NRS), an outcome-based reporting system, was developed to meet the requirements for program accountability.

The assessment policies and procedures included in this document are designed to ensure that adult education programs in South Dakota meet the following requirements of the NRS:

- Use of statewide standardized assessments with parallel forms of pre- and post-tests to determine educational gain of participants
- Use of consistent testing protocols to ensure a standardized testing format and quality data
- Use of data to promote continuous improvement of local programs

IMPACT UPON THE STATE

The NRS defines outcome, participation, and student descriptive measures. Measuring student educational gain with a standardized assessment is one of the core outcome benchmarks. The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), BEST Literacy, and BEST Plus 2.0 are the standardized instruments South Dakota uses to validate student achievement. These tests demonstrate valid and reliable data when used under standard testing conditions. All students are to be assessed using the state-approved standardized tests. Providing accurate and timely assessment of our adult education students is essential for demonstrating the impact of our South Dakota ABE, ASE, and ESL programs.

The assessment must conform to commonly accepted psychometric criteria for validity and reliability, and must meet standards for acceptable assessments as defined by the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL).

Negotiated OCTAE performance targets for the 2019-2020 program year:

PERFORMANCE MEASURE INDICATORS	PY2019 GOAL
Core Outcome Measure: Measurable Skill Gains	
Beginning Literacy ABE	61%
Beginning Basic Education ABE	41%
Low Intermediate ABE	36%
High Intermediate ABE	36%
Low Adult Secondary Education ASE	61%
High Adult Secondary Education ASE	66%
Beginning Literacy ESL	40%
Low Beginning ESL	45%
High Beginning ESL	50%
Low Intermediate ESL	50%
High Intermediate ESL	50%
Advanced ESL	50%
Statewide Targets [for EFL Gain] by Program Type	
Adult Basic Education (ABE + ASE)	43% 625
English Language Acquisition	45% 312
Aggregate Measurable Skills Gain	44% 937

NRS REQUIREMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES

Definitions for Reliability and Validity from the NRS Guidelines

Reliability/Classification Consistency

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency in performance on an assessment (i.e., the extent to which an examinee would be expected to perform similarly across multiple administrations of the instrument or under different conditions). An important condition that can differ across administrations of a particular instrument to be used for the NRS is the form of the instrument administered. More specifically, because educational gain is determined as a function of the difference between an examinee's pre- and post-test performance as measured on different forms of the instrument, it is essential to review the test publisher's information regarding the expected similarity of performance across forms in the absence of instruction or other external interventions. The greater the similarity in performance across forms, the greater the alternate-forms reliability of the instrument and the stronger the inference that improvements in performance between pre- and post-testing are attributable to something other than measurement error associated with differences across forms.

Note that alternate-forms reliability information should be provided for both the raw (or number correct) scores associated with the assessment being reviewed and the translated NRS educational functioning-level classifications. It is the consistency with which examinees are classified into the educational functioning levels that is the most important consideration for determining the appropriateness of the instrument for use in the NRS, because it is movement across the classifications that forms the basis for evaluating educational gain.

In addition, because the consistency of performance measurement may vary with respect to educational functioning levels, information regarding classification consistency should be reported for each level for which the instrument is being considered for use.

Finally, it is important for the test publisher to provide information regarding the nature of the sample used to estimate the reliability of the instrument, because the greater the differences between the sample and the target population (e.g., ABE students), the less generalizable the reliability estimates will be.

Construct Validity

Other types of validity information important in determining the appropriateness of a given instrument for measuring educational gain for the NRS fall under the global heading of construct validity.

Convergent validity concerns the extent to which the scores on the instrument are related to scores on other instruments designed to measure the same or very similar constructs. Programs should review information provided by test publishers regarding the degree of relationship between examinee performance on their instrument and performance on one or more other measures currently approved for measuring educational gain in the NRS. This information should be provided with respect to the raw scores associated with the assessment and with the corresponding NRS educational functioning-level classifications. Likewise, information should be provided regarding the nature of the sample from which the data were collected to determine the extent to which the results are likely to generalize to the population of interest.

Other types of information programs should consider to evaluate construct validity of an assessment include evidence regarding the extent to which scores on that instrument are free from sources of variance not relevant to the skills the assessment measures, such as practice effects or cultural-based knowledge, and the extent to which performance on the assessment is related to other variables that it should be related to. This may include hours of instruction or other important outcome measures (e.g., attainment/retention of employment and acquisition of academic credentials).

PURPOSE AND USES OF ASSESSMENTS

Assessments are given throughout the instructional period for each student. Formal standardized assessments are utilized to establish the initial educational functioning level and document educational gain through post-testing for NRS

purposes. Informal assessments may be used to determine diagnostic or prescriptive lesson planning for each student, track progress within a concept/subject area, or for other instructional purposes.

Quality assessment plays a major role in the following:

- Learners are accurately informed about their basic skill level(s).
- Learners are better equipped to determine appropriate short- and long-term goals.
- Instruction focuses on learners' identified needs instead of relying solely on pre-determined curricula.
- Learners and programs monitor progress toward goals.
- Learners and programs are better equipped to identify other factors that impact progress.
- Programs are accurately informed about learners' basic skill levels.
- Programs are better equipped to determine effectiveness of program design, instructors' proficiency, curricula, and materials.
- Programs are able to inform stakeholders about learners' outcomes.
- Programs have more accurate data on which to make decisions.
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Informal assessment is encouraged to supplement the overall instructional plan. For accountability, all instructional staff is encouraged to supplement formal assessment with informal instruction-based assessments. This will help to avoid improper use or overuse of assessment tools in determining readiness to post-test.

TABE Guidelines – General Assessment Requirements

Data Recognition Corporation developed the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess basic reading, math and language for skills usually learned in grades 1 through 12. Adults eligible to be tested are 18 years of age and older, and not enrolled in school. The TABE assessments are designed to measure achievement of basic skills commonly found in adult education curricula and taught in instructional programs. The tests provide percentile and scale scores, along with grade equivalent scores. Five levels of TABE assessments are available: L (literacy), E (easy), M (medium), D (difficult) and A (advanced).

All teachers are trained on the use of TABE during the Adult Education Instructor Development Program. The topics include the NRS policy guidelines including definitions of measures, conduction assessments, accountability, and data collection process.

MINIMUM INSTRUCTION FOR INCLUSION IN NRS

Documentation of Information

The quality of a program's data is directly linked to the program's commitment to

- following the testing policies and procedures
- scoring tests accurately
- ensuring valid testing and test scores
- reporting accurate and valid test scores

For these reasons, the provider must maintain hard-copy documentation of all information entered into the LACES.

Time Frame of Pre-test

All students must be administered the formal assessment (TABE) during the first 12 hours of instruction. This usually is given during orientation and prior to the goals-setting session with the student.

Competency-Based Test

The TABE is a competency-based testing system. Programs are responsible for ensuring that all staff members understand the testing system. The set of competencies is described in the Individual Student Profile or printed on the student test report. Test administrators must be aware of the different test forms, understand how to determine the appropriate test to administer, and follow test protocol. Learner commitment, the learning environment, supportive services, and quality instruction contribute to a successful competency-based system implementation.

Testing of Students Who Have Stopped-Out

Students who have stopped-out by not attending for 180 days or more must be administered a new pre-test.

Post-Testing Rate

The South Dakota AEL program has a target post-testing rate goal for each AEL and ESL functioning level. The post-testing rate target is 60%. This percentage is determined by comparing NRS Table 4 and Table 4B. Each program shall meet these post-testing rates or prepare a plan of action to bring itself into compliance.

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

When to Use the Locator

Retaining students for sufficient instructional hours and capturing progress through post-testing can prove challenging. Balancing good assessment practices and expediency in programs with transient students is an ongoing challenge. Since the target population attends voluntarily with little external pressure to do so, it is necessary to capture their educational progress as effectively and efficiently as possible to meet accountability requirements, to give students feedback on their progress, and to help teachers and programs adjust practices and evaluate their effectiveness.

To successfully start a new student, it is important to begin with the appropriate TABE assessment level. The Locator should be used during the intake process to determine the appropriate pre-test level. The Locator test allows the instructor to quickly and easily determine the proper level of the TABE test to administer for prescriptive and diagnostic purposes. It gives scores for reading, mathematics, and language items. Some examinees may have scores that vary significantly in these content areas, and may need to be assigned to different TABE levels.

Using the TABE as the pre-test is useful for educational planning and diagnosing strengths and weaknesses. The use of alternate test forms for pre- and post-testing is mandatory. When students demonstrate they are functioning near the top of one level, the next level test may be used as the post-test.

Administration Times for TABE



TABE 11&12 Maximum Allowable Testing Times

Level	Reading Part 1	Reading Part 2	Language	Math Part 1	Math Part 2
L	35 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	75 minutes	N/A
E	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	75 minutes	N/A
M	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	15 minutes
D	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	40 minutes	35 minutes
A	60 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	30 minutes	45 minutes
Locator	45 minutes	N/A	25 minutes	15 minutes	15 minutes

Level	Reading Total Time	Language Total Time	Math Total Time
E,M,D,A	120 minutes	60 Minutes	75 minutes

While using the TABE can provide comprehensive diagnostics, there may be instances when the student and/or instructor may not need to test each content-area. In such situations, however, this generally precludes the ability to post-test for Measurable Skill Gains in other subjects. Here too the use of alternate test forms for pre- and post-testing is mandatory; when students demonstrate they are functioning near the top of one level, the next test level may be used as the post-test.

Refer to *TABE 11&12 Test Administration Manual* for complete instructions.

Audio editions of TABE 11&12 are available for loan through the state AEL office. Additional Data Recognition Corporation materials (e.g., Large Print and Braille) may be ordered online <https://tabetest.com/> or telephonically (800) 538-9547.

Locator Determines Diagnostic Level

South Dakota uses the TABE locator to determine which diagnostic level of standardized assessment is appropriate for the student. Two subtests (reading and math) are generally used for initial placement in the appropriate educational functioning level (EFL). The lowest pre-test score determines the EFL. The exception is if the student would be studying in only one area, such as language or math. The student would only be assessed in that particular area, and the EFL would be determined by the particular test given. Programs may use only the reading or math for placement when the Locator indicates that the L through M should be given in Reading or Math. The language test could be given at a later date.

TABE Levels

- L (Literacy), Grade Level 0 – 1
- E (Easy), Grade Level 2 – 3
- M (Medium), Grade Level 4 – 5
- D (Difficult), Grade Level 6 – 8
- A (Advanced), Grade Level 9 – 12

Levels *L*, *E*, *M* and *D* correspond to the NRS Levels through High Intermediate. TABE Level *A* corresponds to Levels 5 and 6—Adult Secondary Education (ASE).

If a student has been approved for accommodations because of a disability, these same accommodations apply to the pre/post TABE assessment.

Educational Functioning Level	Grade Level	Test Benchmarks TABE 11&12 Scale Score
Beginning ABE Literacy (Level 1)	0 – 1	Reading: 300 – 441 Mathematics: 300 – 448 Language: 300 – 457
Beginning Basic Education (Level 2)	2 – 3	Reading: 442 – 500 Mathematics: 449 – 495 Language: 458 – 510
Low Intermediate Basic Education (Level 3)	4 – 5	Reading: 501 – 535 Mathematics: 496 – 536 Language: 511 – 546
High Intermediate Basic Education (Level 4)	6 – 8	Reading: 536 – 575 Mathematics: 537 – 595 Language: 547 – 583
Low Adult Secondary Education (Level 5)	9 – 10	Reading: 576 – 616 Mathematics: 596 – 656 Language: 584 – 630
High Adult Secondary Education (Level 6)	11 – 12	Reading: 617 – 800 Mathematics: 657 – 800 Language: 631 – 800

Math TABE

The Math TABE assessment is divided into two sections: Applied Mathematics and Math Computation. The use of a calculator is an optional choice for Applied Math only; only approved calculators should be used. Calculator usage is not allowed for Math Computation. Calculators should not be available while students are taking the Computation section.

Test Time Requirements

The TABE must be timed according to the directions found in the Examiner's Manual. Each subject area test should be completed in one sitting. A program may administer all three tests and the Locator in one block of time or spread the tests over sessions, but program personnel should not begin testing if the student cannot be present for the length of at least one full subject area test. All teachers must be trained to administer the TABE assessments through the Adult Education Instructor Development Program, lead-teacher tutelage, the training video, and PowerPoint training activity.

Testing Location

Assessment can be done only in the classroom/learning center under the supervision of qualified personnel. Students cannot take the test home. Other than explaining the directions for taking the assessment and providing scratch paper, no other assistance can be provided. TABE scores should be considered confidential.

Alternate Forms for Pre- and Post-Tests

The TABE 11 is used for assessment, or pre-test, as indicated by the Locator. The TABE 12 form matching the pre-test is to be used for post-testing. Forms of the test (TABE 11 and TABE 12) must be alternated. The same form may not be used to pre- and post-test within 60 days to prevent memorizing the test, invalidating it as a post-test measure for that student.

Annual Testing

TABE 11&12 post-testing (re-assessment) should be completed at least one time each fiscal year.

- For students who test into NRS Levels 1-4 (ABE), the publisher recommends 50-60 hours of instruction (with a minimum of 40 hours) when testing with an alternate form (e.g., 11M to 12M).
- For students who test into NRS Levels 5 and 6 (ASE Low and High), the publisher recommends 30-59 hours of instruction when testing with an alternate form (e.g., 11A to 12A).
- When testing with the same TABE form (e.g., 11M to 11M), 120 hours of instruction are recommended.

Alternate forms of the TABE should be used if multiple post-testing is required to show gain. All post-testing, whether or not gain is shown, is to be entered into LACES.

Exceptions to the Post-Testing Policy

Exceptions should be documented in the student file and used for instructional purposes.

- An exception is made for post-testing of learners who have indicated they are leaving the program although they have not received the minimum recommended hours of instruction or completed the managed class session. While these learners are not expected to demonstrate a significant learning gain, failing to post-test will guarantee no evidence of learning gains. A written request by the instructor to post-test early is required and submitted for the local director's signature.
- Local agency administrators must approve, monitor, track, and document (both to the state and in the learner's file) the students for whom the instructors seek exceptions. The exceptions to the rules may not become the norm for post-testing.
- Local agencies will submit, with each quarterly report, a list of students who post-tested before the minimum number of instructional hours: ABE=40 hours; ASE=30 hours. Explanations will need to accompany the list of exceptions. The state will monitor to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal requirements.
- Managed classroom design may extend beyond the minimum hours of instruction. Therefore, post-testing that would interfere with the design of the class may be given at the end of the managed class session (e.g., If the ABE class is scheduled for 8 weeks at 6 hours per week, post-testing should occur at the end of the class session, rather than after 40 hours of instruction.)

Post-Test with High ASE

When a student pre-tests at the High Adult Secondary educational functional level (EFL) and the goal is to earn the GED® credential, it is not necessary to post-test. This is the only level that is not post-tested. The successful obtainment of the GED® credential in the current program year will demonstrate Measurable Skill Gains across periods of participation.

NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM VS. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRESS

Showing Progress

To show progress on the NRS in a level or movement to higher educational functioning levels, the post-assessment must show progress in the area of the lowest pre-test score and/or the subject area in which the student received instruction. This differs from the informal assessment done for instructional purposes where aspects of the subject area may require greater analysis (e.g., reading and its component areas needing instructional-based assessments in alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Formative assessment is encouraged to supplement the overall instructional plan. All instructional staff members are encouraged to supplement formal assessment with instruction-based assessments. Incorporating formative assessment into the classroom can help avoid the improper use of assessment instruments when determining educational gain.

Entering Scores in LACES

Scores should be entered into the LiteracyPro (LACES) Data Collection Program promptly and submitted no later than the seventh day of the next month.

Enter Scores in Assessment Section

All valid test scores, forms, grade levels, and dates must be entered into the Assessment section. GED® subtest results and any GED Ready™ test scores are also required entries. A program must never manipulate test scores to achieve learning gains that do not accurately reflect a learner's educational functioning level, a learner's educational goal(s), and a learner's progress in all areas in which he/she was working.

Examples of invalid or unreliable test scores would be those results

- derived from an incorrectly scored TABE assessment.
- above or below the valid test range for a TABE assessment.
- derived from the same test form administered to the learner previously and within the past six months.
- derived by not timing the assessment or allowing the student to finish the assessment beyond the timeframe given for the test.

Assess Before Goal-Setting

Initial TABE assessment needs to take place before finalizing student instructional goals and determining initial EFL placement. The student TABE profile should be shared with the student. All teachers working with the student should have the profile or ready access to the profile.

Distance Learning Assessment

Distance learners' testing information entered into LACES must be obtained through on-site testing following assessment policies and standard testing procedures.

New Program Year Assessment

If the TABE pre-test or post-test is administered in January through June, and the student continues class in the new fiscal year, the last recorded [valid] score may be used as the pre-test for the new year. In other cases, the student needs to be retested.

ESL Transition to ABE

Decisions to transition ESL students to ABE should be made at the start of the year. Teachers should attempt to identify those students as early as possible.

Student Data in Program Year

All students remain in the LACES program area in which they initially entered (ABE or ESL) for the entire fiscal year. This means all contact hours are placed in that area. It is understood that an ESL student may actually be spending more time in ABE at some point during the year, but for the purpose of the NRS, the learner cannot change from one program to the other during the fiscal year, and all hours will count in the program placement area.

Negotiated Performance Levels

Each year performance measures are negotiated with the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy. Each local program uses the negotiated performance levels as the required performance for students as they measure student educational functioning gain. (See table in Section 10.1.2)

EFL Descriptors

Please reference the **Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**. In Appendix B, you will note the *New Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language*. <https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/nrs-ta-guide>.

General Goal-Setting Procedures

Adult Education and Literacy instructors will work with each student in determining appropriate long- and short-term goals, taking into consideration the student's assessment results, skills and knowledge, work history, educational attainment, current/potential barriers, family status, as well as any learner-identified personal, civic, and professional goals.

Long-term goals help students clearly identify their goals. Short-term goals ensure the steps are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time specific. Please reference the National Reporting System and the AEL Student Intake Form for further information and a list of core, follow-up, and secondary measures related to learner goals.

Follow-up Methodology:

Entered Employment – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine employment outcomes. The state AEL program will supplement the local survey results with the data matching of available Unemployment Insurance records and some state-level surveys. Therefore, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form.

Retained Employment – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine employment outcomes. The state AEL program will supplement the local survey results with the data matching of available Unemployment Insurance records and some state-level surveys. Therefore, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form.

Obtained a GED® or Secondary School Diploma – Students taking the GED Battery, or even a single subtest, must sign a release of information. The data collection entered into LACES is currently completed by data matching South Dakota's GEDTS®/Pearson VUE reports.

Entered Postsecondary Education or Training – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine postsecondary and/or job training outcomes. Additionally, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form in the event the state has the future ability to data match postsecondary outcomes.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Accommodations Allowed for the TABE

- Audio editions of TABE 11&12 are available through the state AEL office; otherwise, you may contact Data Recognition Corporation for local program purchase.
- Setting accommodations, including a distraction-free space, individual testing, adaptive or furniture height.

- Accommodation available for all students, including colored overlays, straight edges, magnifying sheets, post-it notes, highlighters and writing line guides.
- Test directions are read to all students. Scribes and sign or oral interpreters will be utilized as accommodations require.
- Assistive technology such as the Kurzweil scanner/reader, JAWS screen reading program for the Blind, ZoomTest Screen Magnification, Ergonomic Keyboards and track balls, NaturallySpeaking Voice Recognition software, Big Keys numeric pad and headsets to block noise.

Guidance on Tests and Placement for Special Populations

During student orientation, learners will be informed of their rights to disability accommodations.

Students with documentation of a disability will be provided services as outlined in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Appropriate documentation may include an IEP, doctor's report, diagnosis by doctor or psychologist, and/or referral from an appropriate agency.

If necessary services are not available at the Adult Education provider's locale, the program will coordinate with appropriate agencies to see that these services are provided in a reasonable amount of time.

Each adult education provider will coordinate services with other appropriate departments, agencies, and organizations as needed (e.g., Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, services for the blind, interpreters for the deaf).

TRAINING FOR LOCAL STAFF

Training for Administering Assessments

DLR makes available TABE assessment training during the Adult Education Instructor Development Program. TABE training and review/recalibration kits are also available for local program staff to borrow from the State AEL Professional Development office for staff refresher classes. The kit contains workbooks and a video. Experienced testers must be utilized to train new local test administrators (testers).

Each program must have the *TABE Administration Manual* and *the Norms Book* as reference materials.

All teachers must be complete the Adult Education Instructor Development Program within six months of being hired.

Local programs must annually assess the professional development needs of teachers (i.e., a refresher course).

Annual Refresher

To ensure accuracy, TABE administrators should take a refresher class annually. If instructors do not keep their skills honed, they should not administer the assessment until they recalibrate.

IMPROPER USE OF TABE ASSESSMENTS

Testing Misuse

- Teaching to the actual TABE test item
- Copying and distributing a TABE test item or TABE test booklet to unauthorized personnel or learners prior to or after test administration as a study guide or for explicit instruction
- Administering a pre-test at a lower level than appropriate to artificially increase the learning gain between pre- and post-tests
- Reducing the amount of time given on a pre-test (e.g., less than 20 minutes) while increasing the amount of time on a post-test (e.g., 40-60 minutes)
- Deleting test answers on the pre-test to lower the test score
- Entering the test scores of one learner into another learner's file
- Altering test items or test score information

- Providing the answers to test questions
- Administering tests in quick succession without sufficient time for instructional intervention (e.g., every 3 weeks) to maximize gains
- Failing to administer tests at specific AEL sites or in certain program areas.

Test Security Guidelines

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's Adult Education and Literacy Program requires that all programs abide by these test security guidelines:

- The local adult education program director assumes responsibility for safeguarding all TABE assessment materials, including test administration manuals, and answer sheets (which contain marks or responses) and for the proper administration of TABE assessments.
- All TABE materials should be stored in a file cabinet accessible only to the program director or AEL teaching staff.
- Staff administering assessments should return all materials to the appropriate storage area immediately after use.
- All answer sheets and writing samples are treated as confidential.
- No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted for any reason.
- Defaced materials may not be destroyed unless authorized by the local program director. AEL programs may not use displays, questions, or answers that appear on any TABE test to create materials designed to teach or prepare learners to answer TABE test items.

BEST Plus 2.0 Guidelines

The BEST Literacy and BEST Plus 2.0 were developed by language testing professionals from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).

The BEST Plus 2.0 is an individually administered face-to-face scripted oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. The BEST Plus 2.0 integrates current knowledge in the assessment of speaking and listening skills with the latest knowledge and practice in educational measurement to present a precise, updated, and flexible oral assessment.

The BEST Plus 2.0 comes in two versions—a computer-adaptive assessment on CD or a semi-adaptive print-based version. The computer-adaptive version is the preferred instrument; however, the print-based version may be used in situations where a computer is not available.

MINIMUM INSTRUCTION FOR INCLUSION IN NRS

BEST Plus 2.0 and ESL

The BEST Plus 2.0 must be administered to all ESL students upon entry into the program. This is the initial assessment tool for placement in the proper educational functioning level and takes approximately 6-15 minutes, depending on the student's command of English.

Time Frame of Pre-test

Initial BEST Plus 2.0 assessment needs to take place within the first 12 hours of attendance and before determining student goals and appropriate instructional materials.

Student goals need to be realistic and achievable during the program year. It is the instructor's responsibility to guide students in selecting appropriate goals based on the student testing profile. Meeting small goals consistently through informal assessments can help students measure their own progress and may encourage student persistence.

Testing of Students Who Have Stopped Out

Students who have stopped-out by not attending for 180 days or more must be administered a new pre-test.

Post-Testing Rate

The South Dakota AEL program has a target post-testing rate goal for each ESL functioning level. The post-testing rate target is 60%. This percentage is determined by comparing NRS Table 4 and Table 4B. Each program shall meet these post-testing rates or prepare a plan of action to bring itself into compliance.

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

BEST Plus 2.0 as Pre- and Post-Test

If the BEST Plus 2.0 is the instrument used as the pre-test, the BEST Plus 2.0 must also be administered as the post-test. Multiple forms of the test are provided due to the computer-adaptive feature of the test.

BEST Literacy as Pre- and Post-Test

If a student is given the BEST Literacy test as a pre-test, the student must be post-tested with BEST Literacy test. The pre-test and post-test must be done with the same type of test instrument within the grant year.

NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM (NRS) VS. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRESS

To show progress on the NRS in a level or movement to higher educational functioning levels, the post-assessment must show progress in the area of the lowest pre-test score and/or the subject area in which the student received instruction. This differs from the informal assessment done for instructional purposes where aspects of the subject area may require greater analysis (e.g., reading and its component areas needing instructional-based assessments in alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Formative assessment is encouraged to supplement the overall instructional plan. All instructional staff members are encouraged to supplement formal assessment with instruction-based assessments. Incorporating formative assessment into the classroom can help avoid the improper use of assessment instruments when determining educational gain.

New Program Year Assessment

If the BEST Plus 2.0 is administered between January and June and the student continues attending class in the new fiscal year, that [valid] score may be used as the pre-test for the new program year.

Transition Class Eligibility

When ESL students have progressed through the five NRS ESL educational functioning levels, they are eligible for the Transition Class. This class is designed to bridge the gap between ESL and ABE. This class will combine low-level ABE materials and high-level ESL materials, all designed to help ease the transition into the more independent ABE classes. Without this support, a student can become frustrated and leave the program without reaching his/her goals. Students will continue to improve their high-level ESL communication skills while using ABE materials to develop reading, writing, and vocabulary skills. Students will be assessed using the TABE Locator and the Level E or M Reading test.

Students already entered into the LiteracyPro Data management system as ESL will remain ESL students for the remainder of the program year but can move into a transition to ABE class if they score 565 or higher on the BEST Plus 2.0.

- A student takes the post-test BEST Plus 2.0 and scores a 565 or higher. The student will then move into the Transition Class. At that time, the student will take a TABE Reading Level E or M so that a level of educational need can be determined. The student was previously in LiteracyPro as ESL, so there will be no place to put the TABE information until the next fiscal year. At that time, the student will become an ABE placement.
- A new student takes the BEST Plus 2.0 evaluation and scores a 565 or higher. This student is placed in the Transition Class and is given the TABE Reading Test Level E or M for educational placement and entered into LiteracyPro as ABE.

Annual Testing

BEST Plus 2.0 re-assessment must be completed at least once each fiscal year. The publisher recommends 80-100 hours of instruction; adults may be post-tested after a minimum of 60 contact hours.

Exceptions to the post-testing policy

- An exception is made for post-testing of ESL learners who have indicated they are leaving the program although they have not received 60 hours of instruction or completed the managed class session. While these learners are not expected to demonstrate a significant learning gain, failing to post-test will guarantee no evidence of learning gains. A written request to post-test is required and submitted for the local director's signature.
- Local agency administrators must approve, monitor, track, and document (both to the state and in the learner's file) the students for whom the instructors seek exceptions. The exceptions to the rules may not become the norm for post-testing.
- Local agencies will submit, with each quarterly report, a list of students who post-tested before the minimum number of instructional hours: ESL=60 hours. Explanations will need to accompany the list of exceptions. The state will monitor to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal requirements.
- Managed classroom design may extend beyond 60 hours of instruction. Therefore, post-testing that would interfere with the design of the class may be given at the end of the managed class session (e.g., if the class is scheduled for 8 weeks at 9 hours per week, post-testing should occur at the end of the class session, not after 60 hours of instruction).

Educational Functioning Level Descriptors

Please reference the **Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**. In Appendix B, you will note the *New Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language*. <https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/nrs-ta-guide>.

Student Data in Program Year

All students remain in the program area they initially entered (ABE or ESL) for the entire fiscal year. This means that all contact hours are placed in that area. In the following table, SPL is the Student Performance Level on a scale where Level 0 indicates no ability and Level 10 indicates ability equal to that of a native speaker of the same socio-economic level. (Scoring at Level 7 or above constitutes the exit criterion.)

Educational Functioning Level	BEST Plus 2.0 (Oral)	BEST Literacy
Beginning ESL Literacy	BEST Plus 2.0: 88-361 SPL 0-1	BEST Literacy: 0-20 SPL 0-1
Low Beginning ESL	BEST Plus 2.0: 362-427 SPL 2	BEST Literacy: 21-52 SPL 2
High Beginning ESL	BEST Plus 2.0: 428-452 SPL 3	BEST Literacy: 53-63 SPL 3
Low Intermediate ESL	BEST Plus 2.0: 453-484 SPL 4	BEST Literacy: 64-67 SPL 4
High Intermediate ESL	BEST Plus 2.0: 485-524 SPL 5	BEST Literacy: 68-75 SPL 6
Advanced ESL	BEST Plus 2.0: 525-564 SPL 6 *Exit Criterion BEST Plus 2.0: 565 and above	BEST Literacy: 76-78 SPL 6

General Goal-Setting procedures

Adult Education and Literacy instructors will work with each student in determining appropriate long- and short-term goals, taking into consideration the student's assessment results, skills and knowledge, work history, educational

attainment, current/potential barriers, family status, as well as any learner-identified personal, civic, and professional goals.

Long-term goals help students clearly identify their goals. Short-term goals ensure the steps are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time specific. Please reference the National Reporting System and the AEL Student Intake Form for further information and a list of core, follow-up, and secondary measures related to learner goals.

FOLLOW-UP METHODOLOGY

Entered Employment – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine employment outcomes. The state AEL program will supplement the local survey results with the data matching of available Unemployment Insurance records and some state-level surveys. Therefore, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form.

Retained Employment – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine employment outcomes. The state AEL program will supplement the local survey results with the data matching of available Unemployment Insurance records and some state-level surveys. Therefore, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form.

Obtained a GED® or Secondary School Diploma – Students taking the GED Battery, or even a single subtest, must sign a release of information. The data collection entered into LACES is currently completed by data matching South Dakota's GEDTS®/Pearson VUE reports.

Entered Postsecondary Education or Training – Students in this cohort are determined within LACES by NRS criteria. Each local program conducts a follow-up survey to determine postsecondary and/or job training outcomes. Additionally, it is imperative that all students sign the Release of Information section on the intake form in the event the state has the future ability to data match postsecondary outcomes.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Guidance on Tests and Placement for Special Populations

During orientation students will be informed of their rights to disability accommodations.

Students with documentation of a disability will be provided services as outlined in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Appropriate documentation may include an IEP, doctor's report, diagnosis by doctor or psychologist, and/or referral from an appropriate agency.

If necessary services are not available at the Adult Education program, the program will coordinate with appropriate agencies to see that these services are provided in a reasonable amount of time.

Because no standardized instrument is available to assess for learning disabilities in the ESL population, best practices in teaching is the only alternative.

TRAINING FOR LOCAL STAFF

Training for Administering Assessments

DLR supports BEST Plus 2.0 assessment training either during the English Language Instructor Development Program or as a stand-alone training opportunity. Certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainers must be utilized to train new local test examiners.

All teachers must be complete teacher induction within six months of being hired. Every new full- and part-time ESL teacher is required to attend the English Language Instructor Development Program.

A BEST Plus 2.0 training and recalibration, which is conducted by certified trainers, is available each year. A BEST Plus 2.0 Scoring Refresher Toolkit is also available for local program staff to borrow from the State AEL Professional Development office for staff refresher classes; this kit contains a workbook and video.

Each program must have a *BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide* as reference material.

Local programs must annually assess the professional development needs of teachers (i.e., a refresher course).

Annual Refresher

To ensure accuracy, BEST Plus 2.0 administrators should annually take a refresher course or participate in recalibration training. If instructors do not keep their skills honed, they should not administer the assessment until they recalibrate.

IMPROPER USE OF ASSESSMENTS

Testing Misuse

The following practices are examples of testing misuse:

- Giving hints to change an answer or gestures that an answer is wrong.
- Copying and distributing a BEST test item or BEST test booklet to unauthorized personnel or learners prior to or after test administration as a study guide or for explicit instruction
- Administering a lower level test to artificially increase the learning gain between pre- and post-tests.
- Reducing the amount of time given on a pre-test (e.g., less than 20 minutes) while increasing the amount of time on a post-test (e.g., 40-60 minutes).
- Deleting test answers on the pre-test to lower the test score.
- Entering the test scores of one learner into another learner's file.
- Altering test items or test score information.
- Providing the answers to test questions.
- Administering tests in quick succession without sufficient time for instructional intervention (e.g., every 2-3 weeks) to maximize gains.
- Failing to administer tests to specific ESL sites or in certain students to assure performance is met.

Test Security Guidelines

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation Adult Education and Literacy Program requires all providers to abide by the following test security guidelines:

- The local adult education program director assumes responsibility for safeguarding all BEST assessment materials, including test administration manuals, and answer sheets (which contain marks or responses) and for the proper administration of BEST assessments.
- All BEST materials should be stored in a file cabinet accessible only to the program director or AEL teaching staff.
- Staff administering assessments should return all materials immediately after use to the appropriate storage area.
- All answer sheets and writing samples are treated as confidential until destroyed.
- No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted for any reason.
- Defaced materials may not be destroyed unless authorized by the local program director.

Educational Functioning Levels—Definitions and Descriptors

Please reference the **Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**. In Appendix B, you will note the *New Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language*. <https://nrsweb.org/policy-data/nrs-ta-guide>

Approved Assessment and Screening Tools

Literacy Skills	Skill Levels	Instruments Used
Reading and Problem Solving	Beginning Literacy (ABE) Beginning ABE Intermediate ABE Advanced ABE	TABE Locator TABE Level Forms 11-12 TABE Level E-M TABE Level D-A TABE Level A
Numeracy	Beginning Literacy (ABE) Beginning ABE Intermediate ABE Advanced ABE	TABE Locator TABE Level Forms 11-12 TABE Level E-M TABE Level D-A TABE Level A
Writing	Beginning Literacy (ABE) Beginning ABE Intermediate ABE Advanced ABE	TABE Locator TABE Level Forms 11-12 TABE Level E-M TABE Level D-A TABE Level A
English Language Acquisition	Beginning Literacy (ESL) Beginning ESL Intermediate ESL Advanced ESL	BEST Plus 2.0/ BEST Literacy BEST Plus 2.0/ BEST Literacy BEST Plus 2.0/ BEST Literacy BEST Plus 2.0/ BEST Literacy
Speaking	Beginning Literacy (ESL) Beginning ESL Intermediate ESL Advanced ESL	BEST Plus 2.0 BEST Plus 2.0 BEST Plus 2.0 BEST Plus 2.0

ASSESSMENT TRAINING

TABE

All AEL Teachers should complete the TABE training as part of the Adult Education Instructor Development Program, while refresher training should be offered at the local program sites. Since assessments given as pre-tests and post-tests are the foundation for the accountability system, every staff member must be trained in the proper use of the assessments and standard testing techniques. TABE training may also be conducted by a lead teacher, in conjunction with the video training, at local sites.

BEST Plus 2.0

BEST Plus 2.0 Training may be arranged through DLR/AEL or with state certified trainers. BEST Plus 2.0 training is generally offered at the English Language Instructor Development Program or as a stand-alone training opportunity. A BEST Plus 2.0 Scoring Refresher Toolkit is also available through the DLR/AEL office.

Quality Control

STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND LITERACYPRO DATA COLLECTIONS SYSTEM

Student Requirements

All students entering the Adult Education and Literacy and ESL programs must

- attend an orientation to the program.
- be assessed.
- discuss the assessment results with program staff.
- agree to a course of study or class assignment.

Orientation time includes an intake process, assessment, goal setting, and planning a course of study. These hours may be counted as attendance after the student attends the first hour of instruction.

Each program will describe their procedure for the flow of enrollment paperwork and identify the person(s) responsible for inputting the data into the data collection system for their program. All students are to be enrolled in the data collection system after they have attended both an orientation class/session and one hour of class instruction in Adult Education.

Attendance must be tracked for instructional hours. Intentionally holding students back to count hours in order to meet the target to serve quota for the local program is discouraged. This is pertinent to the students' educational goals and counts for all students who come into the AEL/ESL program. Attendance hours are important for both Adult Education and WIOA Title I annual reports. Student attendance records and files need to be reviewed and kept current.

Program Self-Assessment

LACES offers quick reports and Dashboard Key Performance Indicators to identify students who have been entered without assessments, students' instructional hours for post-testing, students ready for follow-up outcome measure surveys, as well as enrollments and departures.

NRS tables for local programs should be used to inform the program of progress toward the target performance measures for the year. Local planning and review of the program statistics will allow for appropriate planning for goals and objectives leading to continuous program improvement.

Directors are responsible for monitoring their programs and verifying that correct assessment procedures are being followed. Verification of staff adherence to the post-testing policy and the number of students being tested outside the guidelines will be included in local monitoring.

Assessment errors that need to be identified and corrected include

- no assessment or multiple assessments brought forward for continuing students.
- out-of-range scores indicated by a test result more than one TABE level from the level given.
- incorrect use of the same form of the test for pre-and post-testing.

Purchasing Assessment Instruments

Each program is responsible for the purchase of appropriate and approved assessment instruments from its local budget.

TABE testing materials may be purchased from Data Recognition Corporation online at <https://tabetest.com/>.

BEST Plus 2.0 materials must be purchased through the Center for Applied Linguistics online at <http://calstore.cal.org/>

Recommended Timeframes for Pre- and Post-testing

TEST NAME	RECOMMENDED PRE- AND POST-TESTING TIMEFRAMES	PUBLISHER CONTACTS
Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Literacy BEST Plus 2.0	<p>60 hours minimum; 80-100 hours recommended</p> <p>If the hours for a course of instruction exceed the recommended number of hours, post-testing may most appropriately take place at the end of the instructional session.</p> <p>Because program-related factors such as intensity of instruction, class size, teacher training and experience, and use of appropriate curricula and materials will affect language learning proficiency gains, programs should consider these factors when determining timing for pre- and post-testing.</p>	<p>Daniel Lieberman Director, Product and Service Operations Center for Applied Linguistics aea@cal.org 1-866-845-BEST (2378)</p>
TABE, Forms 11 and 12	<p>Data Recognition Corporation recommends 50-60 hours of instruction when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 9M to 10M) for students that test into NRS Levels 1-4 (ABE) with a minimum of 40 hours.</p> <p>For students testing into NRS Levels 5 and 6 (ASE Low and High), 30-59 hours of instruction are recommended.</p> <p>If the pre- and post-test are with the same level and use the same form, 120 hours are recommended.</p> <p>Data Recognition Corporation suggests the pre- and post-test guidelines as best practices recommendations based upon practitioner feedback. The purpose for assessing with TABE 11&12 will also have an impact on the implementation of these recommendations.</p> <p>CTB discourages random and frequent testing as it will not present valid gain scores and could create a practice effect, thus producing questionable or spurious scores. Instructional intervention between testing periods is strongly recommended to maximize gain. Proper use of the Locator Test as a determinant of appropriate content level testing is also strongly recommended and is an integral part of the testing process.</p>	<p>Mike Johnson National Adult Education Director Data Recognition Corporation mjohnson@datarecognitioncorp.com 630-995-6712</p>

Assessment for pre- and post-testing should be supplemented by instructional assessment. Scale scores are used for placing a student into NRS educational functioning levels and to determine whether students have completed levels. (Refer to the EFL tables in **Section 10.4**.)

Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using TABE Assessments for Learners with Disabilities

PURPOSE

The accountability standards in the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act include the Rehabilitation Act [Amendments] of 1973 to improve access to adult programs and achieve employment outcomes for learners with disabilities. Accommodations for fair testing provide all test takers an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and ability. The accommodations may alter test administration procedures without changing what the test is intended to measure.

Summary of three major pieces of legislation

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees that a person with a disability will not be discriminated against because of that disability in any program receiving federal funds.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expands Section 504 and covers more programs and services, especially by including the private sector. It has provisions related to testing accommodations or auxiliary aids for learners with disabilities as well as physical access to access for all learners in education programs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) applies to students aged 3 to 21 years or the age they leave public school. It applies only to those who are educationally disabled and need special education services. Other services include rehabilitation counseling, social work services, and transition planning.

LOCAL PROGRAMS' AND LEARNERS' WITH DISABILITIES RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Local Program Responsibilities

Local test administrators must consider the individual needs of the learner when they provide accommodations. The responsibility of fulfilling learner requests for accommodations is that of the local program, not of DLR or TABE. However, DLR Adult Education can provide information to programs about the appropriateness of an accommodation and, if necessary, information on how to access community resources. TABE has produced Large Print, Braille and Audio-Taped editions of TABE 11&12 and is adapted for test-takers with disabilities. If an accommodation is not employed during instruction, it is important that the accommodation not be used in the testing situation.

Local programs are responsible for providing fully accessible services and have the responsibility to ensure these services meet reasonable criteria. In addition, the program administering the test must provide any necessary accommodations at no cost to the learner. The costs are negligible for most of the common accommodations learners will request.

Local programs should provide information to all adult education learners about the rights and responsibilities of individuals with disabilities and the rights and responsibilities of programs serving individuals with disabilities during the orientation session and during the follow-up counseling and goal-setting session. After information is provided, participants may be asked to disclose information about any disability that may impact their progress toward meeting their short- or long-term goals. Programs may legally ask this very personal question only for the reason to ensure that the learner receives appropriate educational services, including accommodations if necessary. Programs may not ask questions about a participant's disability status simply for reporting on LACES.

Learner Responsibilities

Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for providing information on and documentation of their disability. Documentation may include a medical doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment report from a certified professional, Individual Education Plans (IEP), records from learners previously served under IDEA, or a report from vocational rehabilitation or other service providers.

If a learner discloses a disability, the adult education program must ensure the following occurs:

1. A staff member reviews the documentation of the disability with the learner to begin the process of identifying the impact of the disability on the learner's previous educational efforts and on the learner's short- and long-term goals. During this process, the staff member should document functional needs in the student-file progress notes. Documentation of Disabilities must be included in notes and the form at the end of this section should be filled out and utilized as guidance in lesson planning.
2. The staff member and the learner compile a history on the learner's use of accommodations and the learner's perception of the effectiveness of the accommodations previously used.
3. A staff member assists the learner in identifying possible appropriate accommodations for different scenarios. For example, a learner may use books on tape to review science or history, or use graph paper for math assignments.
4. If the program and learner identify an appropriate accommodation the learner has not used previously, the program provides the learner with instruction on the use of the accommodation and opportunities to practice using the accommodation in a non-threatening environment before using the accommodation publicly or during testing.
5. A staff member is involved in frequent one-on-one counseling with the learner about his/her progress in the program, use of the accommodation, effectiveness of the accommodation, portability of the accommodation into non-educational settings and high-stakes scenarios, acceptability of the accommodation, etc. Revisions are made if necessary.

6. All learners' (including learners with disabilities) test scores, test forms and dates of testing are entered into LACES. Information about accommodations provided to learners with disabilities during testing or instruction must be documented and maintained in the learner's permanent file.
7. LACES data are reviewed on a regular basis to compare the outcomes of learners with no identified disabilities to the outcomes of learners with disabilities to identify areas for program improvement. Local programs may also want to collect data on which and how many accommodations or alternate test forms are provided during test administration for program improvement purposes.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

Accommodations Allowed Without Special Request

Local test administrators may provide or allow some accommodations in test administration procedures or environment for documented disabilities without contacting the AEL Office. Test administrators frequently use these same accommodations as test-taking strategies for other learners who do not have documented disabilities. For example, a learner may request to take only one test per day, to test in a room with natural lighting instead of a room with artificial lighting, or to chew gum while testing. Learners may also be allowed to use a variety of readily available educational tools when taking a test, such as a plain straight-edge ruler, a magnifying strip or glass, colored overlays, graph paper, ear plugs, and other devices as deemed appropriate.

Sample accommodations in test administration procedures or environment are shown in the following table. Examples of these accommodations are extended time, supervised breaks or a sign-language interpreter for test administration directions only. The accommodations listed are suggestions only. Accommodations are based on needs of individual learners and not on a disability category. These strategies do not alter the validity of the test results. The local test administrator does not need to contact the AEL Office when providing these accommodations.

DISABILITY	TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES	TABE 11&12 INSTRUMENTS
Specific learning disability and/or ADHD such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, receptive aphasia, hyperactivity, written language disorder, attention deficit disorder	Extended time Alternate schedule Frequent breaks Scribe/writer/alternate room Computer with spelling and grammar check disabled Simple calculator for Level A/B only	Large-Print TABE TABE Audio CDs
Deaf or hearing impaired Blind or visually impaired Mobility impairment	Sign language interpreter for test directions only Head phones for those taking a listening test Magnifier Extended time Alternate site/equipment Scribe/writer/communication board	Large-Print TABE Computer-Based TABE
Psychiatric disability such as schizophrenia, major depression	Extended time Supervised breaks	

Accommodations Not Allowed

It is not an appropriate accommodation in test administration procedures to read the TABE test to a learner with low literacy skills or blindness. The purpose of a reading test is to assess reading skill levels and to determine the learner's appropriate instructional levels, not to assess knowledge of a subject area.

USE OF APPROPRIATE TABE TEST FORMS

It is important to use an appropriate test form that best meets the learner's goals and manner of receiving and reporting information. Most learners with a disability can take some form of the TABE test.

Contact DLR Adult Education for further information regarding appropriate accommodations for using TABE tests.