State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
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**POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER:
ASSESSMENT FOR ADULT EDUCATION
Effective 2022-2023**

[PPGL-0603 – Revised 12/28/2021]

1. Overview

1.1.   Summary

The Rhode Island Adult Education Assessment Policy establishes the need for and purpose of the assessment policy, specifies testing requirements for in-person and distance learning programs, identifies guidelines for proctored administration of approved assessments and determination of educational functioning levels based on test results, and defines training requirements. The final section of the policy discusses learning disabilities screening and college readiness assessments.

1.2. Need for Assessment Policy

Local adult education programs must assess students using standardized pre- and post-assessments to report educational gains for the National Reporting System (NRS). To promote the quality of these assessment data, the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) at the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), U.S. Department of Education (DOE) requires each state to develop and subsequently submit annually a written assessment policy. The policy is to describe the assessments that local programs may use, when local programs are to administer pre- and post-tests, training requirements associated with assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements. State implementation of effective assessment policy will result in high quality assessment data from local programs.

1.3. Purpose of the Assessment Policy

The purpose of the state assessment policy is to provide guidance to programs relative to their assessment responsibilities in meeting state and federal accountability requirements. This policy does not address other types of classroom- or program-based assessments. Programs are encouraged to continue to use multiple ways to assess progress and achievement and use this information to inform teaching and provide learners with feedback. In addition, the state assessment policy aims to provide guidance to each funded provider in developing a local written assessment policy and procedures document that adheres to the state policy.

1.4. State Context

Assessment data can be used for both accountability purposes and to inform curriculum and instruction. As for accountability, NRS requirements for assessment emphasize the need for valid and reliable assessments for measuring achievement of literacy and language skills for adult students, tied to NRS levels. The use of valid and reliable instruments ensures what is intended to be measured, is measured (i.e., literacy, language, mathematics, etc.) and consistently measured each time an assessment is administered.

Programs can and are encouraged to also use assessments for instructional purposes in determining at what level of instruction the student shall begin and what skills and proficiencies must be achieved. Using standardized tests provides uniformity in determining entry levels and progress.

2. General Guidelines

2.1. Definition of Students to Be Assessed

Students to be assessed are all eligible adults according to Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Specifically, an adult who is eligible for adult education services is an individual:

● Who has attained 16 years of age;
● Who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and
● Who –
    o Is basic skills deficient;
    o Does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
    o Is an English language learner.

2.2. **State Assessments Permitted**

Since this Assessment Policy is effective beginning in the 2022-2023 program year, the state office is carefully watching the Federal Register for the NRS Approved Assessments. In the meantime, programs can use one of the NRS-approved assessments listed below. Programs must use approved standardized assessments for placement of participants into Educational Functioning Levels and to measure and report progress. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, the programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students. Additionally, exceptions may be made when local programs are unable to administer NRS-approved tests due to the widespread disruption of services, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see section 4.1 of this policy for guidance related to widespread disruption of services.

Using approved-NRS assessments uniformly statewide allows for comparability across programs within the state, which is critical since funding is increasingly tied to NRS outcomes. It ensures consistency.

Both NRS and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Adult Education Office currently approve the following assessments:

For ESL
● CASAS
  ○ Life and Work Reading - all forms
  ○ Life and Work Listening - 980 Series
  ○ Reading for Citizenship - Forms 951, 952, 951X, and 952X

● BEST Literacy
● BEST Plus 2.0 (Computer Administered or Print Based)

For ABE/ASE
● CASAS GOALS
  ○ Reading Series
  ○ Math Series
● TABE 11/12

Note that as of this time, CASAS GOALS is approved only for ABE. If CASAS GOALS is approved by OCTAE for ESL students, Rhode Island will also approve this assessment for ESL students as well.

CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) is a competency, outcome-based system for assessing adult basic reading, math, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. Consultation and training are required for implementation of the system. More information is available at http://www.casas.org.

BEST Plus 2.0 (Basic English Skills Test**)** is a revision of the oral interview section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which discriminates among the levels of English language proficiency described in the Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The intended population is adult English language learners who may or may not have received an education in their native language or in English, but who need to function in day-to-day life in the United States. Conversational language skills, including speaking and listening are measured/tested. A six-hour training workshop in administering and scoring the test is <u>required</u> for all test administrators. Additional information is available at http://www.cal.org/BESTplus.

TABE is a standardized test of reading comprehension, vocabulary, language use, spelling, and mathematics. It can be administered either individually or in a group setting. The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. More information is available at:
http://www.datarecognitioncorp.com/Assessment-Solutions/Pages/TABE.aspx

2.3   State Training Requirements

Assessment data should inform program decision-making and program improvement decisions. Program service providers will be trained on the assessment policy, how it should inform curricula and instruction, and collection of quality data for the NRS. New program staff will be expected to receive training on the assessment and goal setting policies as well as intake and orientation processes <u>within</u> <u>three weeks of hire</u>. Assessment-specific training will be expected at its first availability. All new staff are also required to take the self-paced NRS online course titled "Measuring Performance Under WIOA" located at https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/online-courses within three weeks of hire and are required to attend the orientation for new practitioners offered by RIDE's professional development provider.

The state office of adult education shall provide trainings that will include NRS policy, definitions of measures, and accountability policies. Training sessions will also be offered for data collection in the state's adult education management information system (MIS), NRS follow-up, and Data Analysis. These trainings will address how programs use data to make programmatic decisions – gathering, analyzing, compiling, and reporting data. An MIS User's Group will also be conducted on a regular basis. Programs will be responsible for ensuring instructors and appropriate staff understand how to collect and analyze data to inform curricula and instruction.

Each program shall designate an Assessment Specialist to oversee processes for administration, scoring, and reporting of assessments at the program. Additionally, programs shall identify appropriate individuals to administer and score assessments. Training will be scheduled by RIDE's professional development provider for the CASAS and BEST Plus 2.0 assessments. Programs shall keep records of which staff attended training and who conducted the training.

Assessments being used to report educational gain in the state MIS and approved by RIDE for this purpose (CASAS, Best Plus 2.0, BEST Literacy, TABE) can only be given by staff who complete administration certification directly with the publisher or the RIDE PD provider. Documentation of all assessment training and refreshers must be kept on file in the program's professional development records.

Currently, there is no training requirement for administering the TABE assessment; however, those administering it must closely follow the instructions contained in the TABE administration booklet.

2.4   Local Assessment Policy Requirement

Each funded provider must develop a local written assessment policy and procedures document that adheres to the state policy. This required local assessment policy must include:

● a description of assessments the staff in the local program may use;
● time periods when the local program expects its staff to administer pre-and post-tests; score ranges; and
● training requirements local staff must meet associated with approved assessments, their administration, and reporting requirements.

The local assessment policy shall be shared with staff and participants and take into account the provider's instructional delivery system, the intensity, and duration of instruction, and the student population served. Local programs must train all staff on their local assessment policy and keep records (e.g., sign-in sheets, agendas, attendance records) that demonstrate that each staff member participated in such training. In addition, local programs shall only use trained and certified proctors to administer assessments to ensure appropriate test administration in a proctored environment.

In addition to incorporating relevant state assessment requirements, local program assessment policies can integrate assessment-related information contained in the Rhode Island Program Quality Indicators (www.ride.ri.gov/ged). This information can assist programs with defining elements to include in their assessment policy and procedures. Please find below the program quality indicators for Assessment of Learner Performance and Ongoing Assessment (Standard 1B). The standard below is for assessment of learner performance and ongoing assessment.

<u>Standard:</u> The program has a process for the assessment of student progress that is consistent with state policy and guidelines, based on an understanding of the learning process, ongoing, and purposeful.
● Assessment tools and procedures reflect an understanding of the complexities of language, literacy, and numeracy acquisition and use.
● Assessment tools and procedures are aligned with instructional approaches, curricula, and statewide standards.
● Assessment procedures use a variety of evaluation tools for specific purposes.
● Students are actively involved in the assessment of their own progress and develop self-assessment strategies to monitor their own performance and growth.
● Assessment results are shared with the learner and documented and reported according to state guidelines.

Supporting evidence may include (but is not limited to):
● Documentation of assessment procedures and tools and rational for their use
● Student work samples, self-assessments, and test results in student file, goal or educational plan, portfolio, etc.
● Teacher and student observations and reflections in journals, etc.
● Completed and dated outcome reports to funder on file

3. Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of Approved Assessments

As indicated above, programs can use one of the NRS-approved assessments listed below. Programs must use approved standardized assessments for placement of participants into Educational Functioning Levels and to measure and report progress. All students that will be included in the state's NRS data submission must be tested. Exceptions may be made for students who are unable to understand or respond to the test due to low literacy or English proficiency or due to disability. However, the programs must provide some alternative assessment for such students. Additionally, exceptions may be made when local programs are unable to administer NRS-approved tests due to the widespread disruption of services, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see section 4.1 of this policy for guidance related to widespread disruption of services.

Approved Standardized Assessments for RI Adult Education (2022-2023) (as of December 2021)

ESL	ABE/ASE
CASAS ▪ Life and Work Reading ▪ Life and Work Listening 980 series ▪ Reading for Citizenship Forms 951, 951X - 952, 952X	CASAS GOALS ▪ Reading ▪ Math
BEST Plus 2.0 (Computer or Print Based) ▪ Forms D, E, F BEST Literacy ▪ Forms B, C and D	TABE ▪ Forms 11/12

3.1 Testing Requirements Applicable to All Approved Assessments

3.1.1. Pre-assessment Requirements

Local programs must adhere to these pre-testing requirements:

● All participants shall be pre-tested with an NRS- and RIDE-approved assessment prior to completing 12 hours of instruction.
● To determine the appropriate assessment to administer, adult educators should talk with participants during the intake process about educational and career goals, expectations, and instructional practices (including curricula).
● Pre-testing shall be done before instruction begins, but after intake.
● Local programs should try to ensure that the pre-test date is as close to the participation start date as possible.
● While the NRS requires students receive 12 hours of instruction before they may be reported as enrolled, it is important to capture all students, including those students who have received fewer than 12 hours. A "Reportable Individual is an individual who has taken action that demonstrates an intent to use program services and who meets eligibility requirements" (Table 2A). The individual who meets the eligibility requirements is officially a reportable individual upon the completion of intake and orientation, where at a minimum, the individual's age, gender, and ethnicity are collected and inputted into the adult education MIS to report on Table 2A.
● All enrollment data, including demographic and assessment data, must be entered into the state's adult education student MIS at least every two weeks for NRS and data decision-making purposes.
● Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pretest for the next semester or reporting period, provided that the interim does not exceed more than four months. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for "stop outs" returning to adult education classes may be used, provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same four month window. This policy is designed to reduce or eliminate unnecessary testing. Program personnel may wish to retest "stop outs" or students returning the following semester or reporting period if they have reason to believe that during the learner's absence or summer recess a significant learning intervention occurred that may invalidate the learner's previous assessment results. In such circumstances, retesting is always an option.

3.1.2. Post- assessment Requirements

Local programs must adhere to these post-testing requirements:

● Progress (interim) and post-tests should be routine components of a program's instructional process.
● Participants shall be pre- and post-tested with an NRS- and RIDE-approved assessment.
● At least 70% of participants [of participants who have completed at least 12 hours of instruction] must have a pre- and post-test during this fiscal year. It is not necessary to post-test 70% of participants in each level, as long as 70% of the total number of participants is post-tested. In computing this percentage, those pre-testing in the high ASE are excluded from both the numerator and denominator.
● Programs shall test participants at least once after the pre-test within a given fiscal year.
● Depending on the provider's instructional delivery system, the intensity and duration of instruction (i.e., 15 hours per week for 20 weeks or 4 hours per week for 50 weeks), and the student population served, programs are encouraged to test participants more often and according to publisher's guidelines.

- CASAS recommends assessment after approximately 70-100 hours of instruction, with the following exceptions:

  ✔ Programs offering high intensity courses (for example, a class that meets more than 15 hours per week) may choose to test at the end of a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, even though the instructional intervention is more than 100 hours of instruction.

  ✔ Programs offering low intensity courses with fewer than 70 hours in a semester, quarter, term, or other substantial block of instruction, may choose to administer a post-test at the end of the instructional period. However the minimum number of hours between pre and post-test should not be less than 40 hours.

- Publishers of the BEST Plus and Literacy recommend 80 – 100 hours of instruction between pre and post-testing with a minimum of 60 hours.
- If a posttest is administered before the publisher's recommended time frame (CASAS is 40 hours, BEST is 60 hours), programs must have evidence of standards level completion in the student's portfolio and approval from the program administrator that documents why an early post-test was warranted.
- The same assessment instrument should be used for pre-testing and post-testing, using alternate forms for each, or specified by the assessment publisher.
- If, due to extenuating circumstances, no post-test is given during the fiscal year, the program participant must be counted as remaining in the same educational level as upon entry and cannot be reported as advancing to a higher functioning level.
- An "advance" or "completion" of one or more Educational Functioning Level (EFL) is recorded if, according to a post-assessment, the participant has skills corresponding to one or more levels higher than the incoming level in the areas initially used for placement. If an assessment is given in multiple subject areas (such as reading and math), the lowest content area score does not necessarily have to be the only score to improve in order to <u>show an EFL gain</u>.

3.1.3. Test Administration Requirements

It is critical that local programs adhere to these test administration requirements to ensure that test data are meaningful:

- Programs shall follow appropriate test administration policies, procedures, and practices, as published by developers of the approved tests.
- ***The CASAS Appraisal test, or the CASAS Locator for eTests, must be administered to students to determine which CASAS form to use as a pre-test. Appraisals or Locators cannot be used as a pre-test.***
- Assessment instruments shall be administered in a proctored environment and in accordance with publishers' and RIDE's assessment guidelines.
- Programs must make accommodations for adults with disabilities who request them and must do so following test developer guidelines. Programs shall keep good records on their requests for testing accommodations.
- Assessment results (e.g., scores, but not individual test question answers) shall be shared with learners as soon as possible after the assessment is completed.
- Programs may share test results with instructors to inform curricula and instruction, but must maintain confidentiality in other instances. Test scores may be shared in the aggregate, but no

personal identifying information can be revealed; nor may results be publicly reported in cells smaller than six (6) observations to protect an individual's privacy.
- Programs' pre- and post-testing rate can be calculated using NRS Table 4 and 4b.
- Programs must put in place strict information security and confidentiality guidelines to ensure test security and protect student information.
- Agency directors and other staff certified to administer the CASAS need to maintain a specific test security policy that discusses the proper handling and use of test materials.
- All testing personnel must sign the *CASAS Test Security Policy Agreement* (see Appendix A) agreeing to uphold this security policy and the RIDE Adult Education Assessment policy at the agency or program.

3.1.4. Process and Procedures for Verification and Procedural Check

In addition to the program having a written assessment policy that provides information and documentation that follows the state assessment policy guidelines (appropriate assessment, time periods, pretest and post-test, score ranges, forms and versions, etc.), program staff must have a copy of the policy and have been trained in the administration of the approved assessments in use, according to publisher guidelines. A record of training must be available at the program site with training materials, the agenda, sign-in sheet, evaluations, etc. During a site review or phone/desk review, staff must be able to identify the sections of the document related to these policies.

3.2. Using Test Results to Determine Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs)

The NRS divides educational functioning into four levels for ABE (1-4), two levels for ASE (5-6), and six levels for ESL (1-6). The levels for ABE are beginning literacy, beginning basic education, and low and high intermediate basic education. The levels for ASE are low and high adult secondary education. Each ABE and ASE level has a description of basic reading, writing, numeracy, and functional and workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The six ESL levels are beginning literacy, low beginning ESL, high beginning ESL, low and high intermediate ESL, and advanced ESL. The ESL levels describe speaking and listening skills and basic reading, writing, and functional workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The skill descriptors illustrate the types of skills students functioning at that level are likely to have. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at that level but provide examples to guide assessment and instruction. See the NRS Technical Assistance Guide, Appendix B for details of the Level Descriptors: https://www.nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Aug2019-508.pdf

At the low and intermediate levels, the basic reading and writing skills are identical for both ABE and ESL. At the higher levels (secondary level for ASE, advanced level for ESL), the reading and writing skills are designed to be slightly higher for ASE than for ESL, because the adult secondary level is designed to be the highest level. The functional and workplace skills for ABE and ESL also differ somewhat by having a stronger second language focus for ESL. Speaking and listening skills are only described for ESL, and numeracy is only described for ABE to reflect common instructional practice. Programs, however, may apply the numeracy descriptors to ESL students and the speaking and listening descriptors to ABE students if the students' needs and the program's instruction warrant this approach.

- The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical student functioning at that level should be able to do. They are not a full description of skills for a particular level. When a student has skills at one or more levels above the placement level, they have completed that level and can advance to the next level.

- Students do not need to be assessed in all of the areas described in the level descriptors. The local program must decide the skill areas most relevant to each student's needs or the program's curriculum and assess students in these areas. At a minimum, students must be assessed in basic reading, writing or math, or speaking and listening for English language learners (BEST Plus 2.0).

- New NRS guidance allows that any functional level (not just the lowest) may be used to determine initial placement as well as educational gain in subsequent assessments. If multiple skill areas are assessed and the student has different abilities in different content areas, the program can place the student according to the student's needs and goals or the program's curriculum focus. For example, if a student's math score is lower than their reading score, they do not have to be placed in the math level. If more than one score is entered into the MIS, the student will automatically be placed in the lowest level. However, the lowest content area score does not have to be the only score to improve in order to show an EFL gain.

- A Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) is an indicator used under WIOA to measure a participant's interim progress through pathways that offer different services based on program purposes and participant needs. The five types of MSG are described in OCTAE Program Memo 17-2 (p. 17). Documented achievement of at least one EFL gain by a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary level through pre- and post-testing is MSG Type 1a. The goal is for each participant to demonstrate an MSG during each period of participation.

The NRS EFL table and corresponding standardized test scores can be accessed here: . https://www.nrsweb.org/. These level descriptions and associated test scores allow local programs to use test scores to determine the appropriate EFL placement for a student, as well as the appropriate post-EFL for a student.

3.3 Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved CASAS Assessments

CASAS is a competency, outcome-based system for assessing adult basic reading, writing, math and listening skills (for ESL). The intended population is adults functioning at or below a high school level in attaining the basic literacy skills to function effectively on the job, in the community, and in the family. Consultation and training are required for implementation of the system. More information is available at: http://www.casas.org.

3.3.1. What is CASAS?

The CASAS includes a variety of curricula and training resources, as well as assessment instruments. CASAS assesses student attainment of a range of specific competencies presented in functional contexts. Assessments can be used to measure proficiency in skill areas and to check for learning progress.

Different CASAS standardized assessments are used at various points in the educational cycle. Appraisal tests provide an initial screening of a learner's basic skill abilities. Pre-tests inform instruction by conducting a learning needs assessment and identifying strengths and weaknesses. Pre-tests also establish the baseline ability level for a learner in a skill area. Post- tests are administered after an instructional intervention to monitor progress from the baseline and to plan the next steps.

Pre- and post-tests are available in three different series that vary primarily in contextual focus (for example, employability versus general life skills and work skills).

1.   **Life and Work Reading (ESL Only)**

2. **Life and Work Listening 980 Series (ESL Only)**
3. **Reading for Citizenship - Forms 951, 951X–952, 952X (ESL only)**
4. **Reading GOALS (ABE/ASE only)**
5. **Math GOALS (ABE/ASE only)**

Programs are required to select the test series that responds to the federal NRS but may also select other series based on learner goals and the instructional focus of the program.

3.3.2. Test Administration Requirements

The CASAS Appraisal test must be administered to students to determine which CASAS form to use as a pre-test. Next, a CASAS pre-assessment is administered based on the appraisal score. An appraisal cannot be used as the pre-or post-assessment.

3.3.3. Which CASAS series do I use?

➢ ABE/ASE students take the CASAS GOALS Appraisal and the corresponding reading and/or math CASAS GOALS assessments
➢ ESL students take the CASAS Life and Work Appraisal and the corresponding CASAS Life and Work reading and/or listening pre-and post-assessments.
  o Please note that advanced level ESL students who score 236 or above on a CASAS Life and Work pre-test ("Exit Advanced ESL") must be retested using CASAS GOALS in order to establish an NRS-reportable entering EFL. If they are not retested, the student will not appear on federal reports. Retesting a student will establish a reportable entering EFL. These students can still enroll in ESL classes, they will just be categorized as ABE/ASE for reporting purposes.

3.3.4. How do I use the CASAS appraisal to determine the pre-and post-assessment level to administer?

Adult learners often function at widely varying levels of basic skill ability. Therefore, each learner who is new to adult education is required to take an appraisal (placement) test at program entry. CASAS appraisal tests gauge a learner's reading, math, and/or listening skills. They are broad tests that span a wide spectrum of the CASAS scale. Available Appraisal Instruments are noted below.

1. **Reading – Beginning Literacy Forms 27-28 (ESL Only)**
2. **Reading - Life and Work Form 80 (ESL only)**
3. **Listening - Life and Work 980 Series (ESL only)**
4. **Reading – Reading GOALS 900 Series (ABE/ASE only)**
5. **Math- Math GOALS 900 Series (ABE/ASE Only)**

For programs using CASAS e-Tests, the computer adaptive test (CAT) locator that is included within e-Tests can serve as the "appraisal" for the purposes of pre-test selection.

3.3.5. How much time is required to administer CASAS GOALS instruments?

Reading Goals Form 900R Appraisal (paper)
Appraisal 28 Items/30 minutes

Reading GOALS Form 104R Locator (e-Tests)
Locator 12 Items/15 - 30 minutes

Math Goals Form 900 Appraisal (paper)
Appraisal 20 items/30 minutes

Math GOALS Form 104M Locator (e-Tests)
Locator 10 Items/15 - 30 minutes

Reading GOALS (Pre- and Post-Tests, paper, and e-Tests)
Level A – 39 items/60 minutes
Level B – 40 Items/75 minutes
Level C – 40 items/75 minutes
Level D- 40 items/75 minutes

Math GOALS (Pre- and Post-Tests, paper and e-Tests)
Level A/B- 40 items/60 minutes
Level C/D – 40 items/75 minutes

3.3.6. How do I use CASAS to determine the correct EFL?

The Relationship of CASAS Scale Score to NRS Levels for ABE and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)

READING LEVELS

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Reading GOALS 900 Series Scale Scores Ranges
1. Beginning ABE Literacy	203 and below
2. Beginning Basic Education	204-216
3. Low Intermediate	217-227
4. High Intermediate	228-238
5. Low Adult Secondary Education	239-248
6. High Adult Secondary Education	249 and above

MATH LEVELS

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Math GOALS 900 Series Scale Scores Ranges
1. Beginning ABE Literacy	193 and below
2. Beginning Basic Education	194-203

3. Low Intermediate	204-214
4. Middle Intermediate	215-225
5. High Intermediate	226-235
6. Adult Secondary Education	236 and above

The Relationship of CASAS Scale Score to NRS Levels for ESL

Entering Educational Functioning Level	Life and Work Reading 80 Series Scale Score Ranges	Life and Work Listening 980 Series Scale Score Ranges
1. Beginning ESL Literacy	180 and below	162-180
2. Low Beginning ESL	181-190	181-189
3. High Beginning ESL	191-200	190-199
4. Low Intermediate ESL	201-210	200-209
5. High Intermediate ESL	211-220	210-218
6. Advanced ESL	221-235	219-227
Exit Advanced ESL[1]	236 and above	228 and above

3.3.7. What accommodations can be made?

Programs should follow the guidelines described in *Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using CASAS Assessment Systems* when using the CASAS assessments with students who have disabilities. See:
https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/testing-guidelines/accommodations-guidelines

3.3.8. How do I know when to use different levels and forms of the CASAS?

Next Assigned Test Charts provided by CASAS or the TOPSpro Next Assigned Test Report by Learner and Class should be consulted to guide pre- and post-test selection. If programs use CASAS eTests, the pre- and post-test selection happens automatically. Post-testing will be at either the same level or a higher level, depending on the pre-test score. An alternate test form within the same test series is recommended for post-testing. Never give the same form of the assessment at the same level to a student twice in a row. Additionally, the post-test must be in the same skills area as the pre-test; that is, programs cannot use a reading pre-test and a math post-test to determine learner gains.

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[1] Please note that advanced level ESL students who score 236 or above on a CASAS Life and Work pre-test ("Exit Advanced ESL") must be retested using CASAS GOALS in order to establish an NRS-reportable entering EFL. If they are not retested, the student will not appear on federal reports. Retesting a student will establish a reportable entering EFL. These students can still enroll in ESL classes, they will just be categorized as ABE/ASE for reporting purposes.

Please note that advanced level ESL students who score 236 or above on a CASAS Life and Work pre-test ("Exit Advanced ESL") must be retested using CASAS GOALS in order to establish an NRS-reportable entering EFL. If they are not retested, the student will not appear on federal reports. Retesting a student will establish a reportable entering EFL. These students can still enroll in ESL classes, they will just be categorized as ABE/ASE for reporting purposes.

3.3.9 CASAS State Training Requirements

Assessment data should inform program decision-making and program improvement decisions. Program service providers will be trained on the assessment policy, how it should inform curricula and instruction, and collection of quality data for the NRS. New program staff will be expected to receive training on the assessment and goal setting policies as well as intake and orientation processes within three weeks of hire. Assessment-specific training will be expected at its first availability.

Program Directors and assessment staff must review and sign the RIDE-issued *CASAS Test Security Policy and Agreement* on an annual basis and keep it on file with the program professional development records. A template to be used for this purpose can be found in Appendix A of this document.

CASAS training can be completed through:
- self-study asynchronous training modules available at http://training.casas.org/
- or live facilitated training (offered by the RIDE PD provider or CASAS)

Below is a breakdown of the required training modules based on the role of the user:

User Role	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4
Tester - Administer eTests only	x	x		Optional
Tester - Administer Paper Only	x		x	Optional
Tester - Administer eTests & Paper	x	x	x	Optional
Teachers	x			x
Order paper materials	x		x	
Order web units	x	x		
Train others at own agency	x	x	x	x

Effective July 1, 2020, all adult education providers who administer the CASAS *paper and pencil* or *online* test need to complete the training modules required for their roles following the publisher guidelines outlined in the table .

Recertification needs to be completed every two years. RI will follow any updates to the publisher's guidelines for recertification.

Documentation of all assessment training and refreshers, including the copies of the *CASAS Test Security Policy and Agreement*, must be kept on file in the program's professional development records.

3.4. Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved BEST Plus 2.0 Assessment

3.4.1 What is BEST Plus 2.0?

BEST Plus 2.0 (Basic English Skills Test) is a revision of the oral interview section of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), which discriminates among the levels of English language proficiency described in the Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The intended population is adult English language learners who may or may not have received an education in their native language or in English, but who need to function in day-to-day life in the U.S. Conversation language skills, including speaking and listening are measured/tested. A six-hour training workshop in administering and scoring the test is required for all test administrators. Additional information is available at: http://www.cal.org/aea/bp/

For information about accommodations: http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/BP2.0-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf and http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/BL-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf

FAQs: http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/Frequently-Asked-Questions-CAL-Adult-ESL-Assessments.pdf

The BEST Plus 2.0 comes in two (2) versions:
  ➢ A computer-adaptive assessment on USB or
  ➢ A semi-adaptive print-based version

In the computer-adaptive version, the test items are provided by software on USB. The tester asks the examinee questions provided by the computer program, listens to the responses, and uses rubrics to score each item. After inputting the item score, the computer selects the next test item and continues to adapt the difficulty level of the questions according to the scores entered for each question. Each time the interview is administered to the same examinee (e.g., for pre- and post-testing), the computer generates a different set of test questions. In the print-based version, a brief locator test determines the level of test items. Parallel forms A, B, or C may be used for pre-, interim-, and post-assessment.

For both versions of the BEST Plus, you must purchase a fixed number of administrations (20, 50, 100, 300, 500). Thus, each time someone is tested (either in print or via computer), an administration is consumed.

3.4.2. How much time is required to administer the BEST Plus 2.0?

BEST Literacy	1 hour
BEST Plus computer	5 – 20 minutes to administer, depending on the English ability of the examinee
BEST Plus print	10 – 20 minutes per examinee

3.4.3. How do I know when to use different levels and forms of the BEST Plus 2.0?

With the BEST Plus computer-adaptive assessment on USB, the computer generates a different set of test questions each time the interview is administered to an examinee. In the print-based version, a brief locator test determines the level of test items (level 1, 2, or 3). There are three (3) parallel forms (D, E, F) that may be used for pre-, interim-, and post-assessment.

3.4.4. How do I use the BEST Plus 2.0 to determine the correct EFL?

With the BEST Plus 2.0 computer-adaptive assessment on USB, the computer tallies the score and provides the correct SPL and NRS level. In the print-based version, the raw score must be input into a computer management system to determine the scale score, SPL, and EFL.

3.5 Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved BEST Literacy Assessment

BEST Literacy is a print-based, combined test of reading and writing skills. The test uses authentic situations specifically geared for adult English language learners in the United States as the basis for test questions. BEST Literacy is aligned with the ESL descriptors of the National Reporting System and the Student Performance levels.

- **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.

BEST Literacy may be administered to groups or individuals in one hour or less. Each examinee is given one test booklet which contains instructions and the test questions. The test administrator verbally provides test directions and examinees then write their answers in the test booklet.

All scoring is done after the testing is complete, either by the test administrator or by a designated test scorer. Scoring instructions are provided in the BEST Literacy Test Manual. Using the separate scoring sheet that corresponds to the appropriate examinee test booklet (Form B, C, or D), the examinees' responses are scored based on comprehensibility. The specific answers for the reading and writing sections (including the multiple choice, fill in the blank, completion, extended response, and cloze exercises) are provided for the scorer on the scoring sheet.

The BEST Literacy Test Manual contains a writing rubric and benchmarks to score the writing tasks. A raw score is calculated based on the combined scores of the reading and writing tasks. A scale score is determined using the conversion tables located in the BEST Literacy Test Manual.

Performances on BEST Literacy can be interpreted in terms of the National Reporting System (NRS) ESL educational functioning level descriptors or the Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors, designed specifically for adult learners of English.

No formal training is required, except to follow the guidance in the *Best Literacy Test Manual*. http://calstore.cal.org/Default.aspx?TabID=251&productId=65

For more information about BEST Literacy: http://www.cal.org/aea/bl

3.6 Procedures for Administering and Reporting Results of the Approved TABE Forms

TABE 11/12 results are used to place each person in the appropriate instructional or training program and track progress toward success. Tests are focused on key factors required for vocational training programs and most often demanded by employers. Relevant test questions focus on items encountered in daily life, such as paychecks, bills, and advertisements. TABE comes in a variety of lengths, levels, forms, and formats to fit students' assessment needs and goals. TABE can be hand-scored or scored locally with TestMate TABE software. In addition to its paper-and-pencil format, TABE can be administered on a Windows-based computer using TABE-PC, or over the Internet using TABE Online.

For more information about TABE: http://tabetest.com

A wide range of accommodation materials is also available to help evaluate the skills of adults with special needs. For more information about accommodations for the TABE:
http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_Guidelines_to_Inclusive_Testing_2017.pdf

4. Guidance for Programs Serving Distance Learning Students

Distance Education is any formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media, including but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, Web-based programs, and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication by mail, telephone, e-mail, or online technologies and software.

Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as all adult learners in Rhode Island. Students must be pre-tested using any of the RIDE-approved and NRS-compliant tests (i.e., CASAS, Best Plus, and BEST Literacy). All students must be post-tested after the appropriate number of hours of instruction specified by the test developer, at the end of the semester, or upon completion of defined curricula. The RIDE Adult Education Assessment Policy, in other words, applies fully to distance learning students and no distance learning students will be included in state and federal reporting that do not have assessment results arrived at by following the state's assessment policy.

This means that all assessment of distance learning students must occur in secure, proctored settings, but it is permissible to arrange for remote testing locations that are more convenient for distance learners as long as all other state requirements concerning assessment are met.

Distance students must follow all existing assessment policies for administration, scoring and interpretation of test results. The NRS Guidelines state that distance students "should be post-tested after the same amount of instructional time as other students, according to the state's approved NRS assessment policy."

Rhode Island has adopted a proxy hour model, which means that this model must be used to determine when to post-test. Programs will determine when distance learning students have reached the minimum hours of instruction required for post-testing and will make arrangements for distance learners to be post-tested in a proctored environment.

4.1 Guidance for Programs Serving Distance Learning Students During Widespread Disruption of Services

4.1.1 Testing Exemptions

Local programs unable to administer an NRS-approved test to a distance learning participant due to the widespread disruption of services, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, may

exempt that student from testing. In this instance, local programs may use informal assessments to provisionally determine a student's educational functioning level for instructional and NRS-reporting purposes.

Local programs that exempt participants 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 any disruption to services can be appropriately tracked. Programs should also maintain documentation of provisional educational functioning level determinations for NRS reporting purposes. Local programs should administer NRS-approved pre-tests as soon as feasible and adjust any provisional educational functioning level placements according to the NRS-approved pre-test score.

A participant cannot achieve an Educational Functioning Level gain without an NRS-approved pre- and post-test.

4.1.2 Administering Virtual Testing

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.

Even if virtual test proctoring is possible, testing exemptions may still be allowed if students lack the necessary digital literacy skills, equipment, and/or bandwidth for remote testing to be implemented.

5. Guidance for Programs Serving Adults with High School Credentialing and Postsecondary Education and Training Enrollment Goals

If a student has the goal of entering postsecondary education, the program should give participants the option to take the Accuplacer tests or similar college readiness assessment within 30 days of enrollment so that participants and their teachers develop an understanding of the specific skills to be developed. The tests will be offered at no cost to the participant. Information about the Accuplacer tests (Sentence Skills, Reading Comprehension, Arithmetic, Elementary Algebra, College Level Math, and Written Essay) can be found at: http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/index.html

Similarly, programs are expected to give participants with employment goals the option to take a work readiness test of their choice, such as WorkKeys or the National Work Readiness Credential test. Information about WorkKeys can be found at: http://www.act.org/workkeys/. Information about the National Work Readiness Credential can be found at: http://www.workreadiness.com/

6. Guidance Regarding Assessment of Eligible Adults with Disabilities

RIDE's local adult education programs are responsible for providing fully accessible services. Adults with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities may not be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a standardized test administration or with a standard test format. Accommodations may modify the conditions of administering a test or change the physical presentation of the assessment instrument in order to compensate for the disability. These accommodations are available to allow the test taker with a disability to demonstrate their skills and abilities more accurately. In all cases, accommodations must meet the needs of the examinee without changing what the test is intended to measure.

Eligible individuals are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. If an individual chooses to

self-report a disability, they become eligible to receive testing accommodations. However, individuals are *not required* to disclose their disability and may elect to participate in a program without any special accommodations.

The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the eligible individual's ability to demonstrate performance on the assessment. This information can come from:

(1) the doctor's report;

(2) the diagnostic assessment from a certified professional; and

(3) other clinical records.

If a learner self-discloses a disability and provides valid, corroborating documentation, it is the responsibility of the local program to provide reasonable accommodations. Local programs may not deny or prevent access to services based on a learner's disability. The local program's LD Designee is responsible for sharing current information about learning disabilities, ensuring that staff are informed about the availability of accommodations as part of the enrollment process or orientation, and attending state sponsored LD trainings.

The accommodations provided in assessment should be similar to the accommodations used during instruction. A request for accommodations and documentation of an individual's eligibility for specific testing accommodations must be maintained in the individual's student file and must not be revealed without proper authorization as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Adult Education program staff should work to ensure that records are handled appropriately.

The local program should consult the test publisher guidelines before administering testing to ensure that approved accommodations for the learner are permitted.

CASAS: https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/testing-guidelines/accommodations-guidelines

BEST: http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/BP2.0-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf and http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/BL-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf

TABE: http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_Guidelines_to_Inclusive_Testing_2017.pdf

Additionally, learners should have an opportunity to use test-taking aides that do not affect the administration of the test. Aides may be allowed for learners without a documented disability and might include: colored transparent overlays, clear transparent overlays and highlighters, temporary adhesives with spatial directions, earplugs, large print tests (if available), magnifying devices, priority seating, hats, caps, or visors to minimize fluorescent lighting, or an unmarked straightedge. If in question, a program should contact the RIDE in determining the appropriateness of an adaptation.

7. Data Quality Control Procedures

7.1 Entering Data into the State's Adult Education Management Information System (MIS)

After the participant is enrolled in the local program, all demographic, attendance, and testing data must be entered into the state's adult education MIS at least every two weeks for National Reporting System and data decision-making purposes.

7.2 Adult Education Data Review Process

Once data (demographic, attendance, and testing) have been entered into the adult education MIS by the data entry personnel and fiscal year summaries have been run, the local program administrator should review the MIS's data validation area, which will flag records with missing or incorrect data for any of the common WIOA data elements. Data validation will be reviewed at the local and state level to ensure accurate performance outcomes and consistency across programs.

Frequently Asked Questions:

In what skill areas should students be assessed?

Students should be assessed in the academic area(s) most relevant to their needs. For example, if a student is enrolled for the sole purpose of upgrading math skills, only the math sub-test should be administered. While the entire battery of tests is not required, programs may decide to give all the sub-tests to better plan instruction.

For ESL students, you may need to select more than one standardized instrument to appropriately assess the necessary skill areas. For example, the BEST Literacy assessment can be used to measure reading, but not oral skills. Therefore, you may need to administer BEST Plus 2.0 for speaking/listening.

The RI adult education MIS will allow multiple assessment instruments to be selected. If different ESL assessments are used to measure different skills (i.e., BEST for listening/speaking and CASAS for reading/writing), the lowest score (by date) will determine the Entry EFL in the MIS .

Do I need to use locators and appraisals?

Locators and Appraisal Tests are used to determine the most appropriate pre-test level for each student. CASAS has an Appraisal Form for paper tests, and a Locator for eTests. TABE has a Locator Test.These instruments should always be used prior to administering the actual pre-tests. These instruments may NOT be used in place of a pre-test to determine a scale score or grade equivalent for placement on entry EFL. Proctors must follow publishers' test administration protocols when administering all NRS approved tests.

When do I administer the pre-tests?

Pre-tests should be administered prior to actual instruction. Pre-tests must be administered within the first 12 hours of attendance.

How do I document student completion of an EFL or advancement from one level to the next?

The only way to verify that a student has completed an EFL or advanced from one level to the next is by comparing documented standardized pre- and post-assessment scores.

Are standardized assessments the only kind of assessment to be used in the classroom?

In addition to the required standardized pre- and post-assessment instruments, a program should continue to use a variety of formal and informal instruments and procedures to collect valid on-going information regarding student instructional needs and progress. Some examples include, end of unit tests

from textbooks; instructor-made assessments; standards-based assessments/rubrics; portfolios; projects/products with clearly defined criteria or performance standards; student self-evaluations, etc.

Where should assessment take place?

Whether the student is taking a pre-, interim-, or post-assessment, they must have a quiet, comfortable environment in which to take the assessment. The environment should be well lit with comfortable seating and heating/cooling. Whenever possible, the assessment area should be in a separate, designated area, free of distractions and noise.

Are standardized assessments interchangeable?

The assessment scores of one standardized instrument are not comparable to those of another. In assessing student educational gains within a program year, switching from one instrument for pre-assessment, to another for interim- or post-assessment is NOT allowed.

For ESL assessment, different instruments may be chosen to measure different skill areas. However, the interim- and post-assessment MUST always match the pre-assessment.

What assessment form should be used for post-assessment?

The parallel form of the assessment instrument used to determine the entry EFL must be used to determine the exit EFL and the educational gain. Programs should refer to the publisher's test administration manual to determine the correct next assigned test.

How frequently should standardized assessment be administered?

During each program year, a parallel form of the standardized assessment used for pre-assessment must be administered as a post-assessment to students. The publisher's guideline for the CASAS instrument indicates a minimum of 40 hours and a maximum of 70-100 hours of instruction between pre and post-test. The guideline for BEST Plus 2.0 is a minimum of 60 hours and a maximum of 80 – 100 hours.

"There is no recommended minimum number of hours of instruction that must occur if a different form or different level of the TABE pre-test is administered as a post-test" (TABE FAQs).

Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pretest for the next semester or reporting period, <u>provided that the interim does not exceed more than four months</u>. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for "stop outs" returning to adult education classes may be used, <u>provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same four month window.</u> This policy is designed to reduce or eliminate unnecessary testing. Program personnel may wish to retest "stop outs" or students returning the following semester or reporting period if they have reason to believe that during the learner's absence or summer recess a significant learning intervention occurred that may invalidate the learner's previous assessment results. In such circumstances, retesting is always an option.

Can the post-assessment score from one year be used as the pre-assessment for the next year?

Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pretest for the next semester or reporting period, <u>provided that the interim does not exceed more than four months</u>.

However, if a program is changing from using one assessment instrument to another (i.e., in the past it used the TABE and now it will be using the CASAS), you must begin the program year by pre-assessing with the newly adopted instrument so that you will have parallel entry, interim-, and final post-assessment results for the program year.

How do I handle assessment of students who have a specific short-term goal?

Some students enter a program with a specific short-term goal. For example, an ASE student may simply want to take the GED Ready practice test for the GED to determine if they possess the necessary skills for earning a GED. If that student does well, they will probably receive less than 12 hours of instruction and achieve their goal.

Students with such specific short-term goals are NOT given a standardized pre-assessment and are NOT assigned an EFL. Students who later decide to study more than 12 hours, MUST then complete a standardized pre-assessment and be assigned an EFL.

APPENDIX A: CASAS Test Security Policy and Agreement

Agency directors and other staff certified to administer the CASAS need to maintain a specific test security policy that discusses the proper handling and use of test materials.

All testing personnel must sign the CASAS Test Security Policy Agreement below agreeing to uphold this security policy and the RIDE Adult Education Assessment policy at the agency or program.

Should CASAS determine that any agency or program has violated any provision of this test security policy or that testing materials have been compromised in any manner, purposely or otherwise, CASAS reserves the right to take appropriate action to rectify the violation of its test security policy.

Test Security Policy Guidelines

To protect the quality and standardization of CASAS assessments, I agree to:

1. Follow all test procedures as required in this Test Security Policy document.
2. Secure all CASAS test materials, whether paper-based or computer delivered, under lock and key except during testing sessions.
3. Ensure that before or after any test administration all test materials are secure and inaccessible to any non-testing personnel, examinees, or others not responsible for test administration.
4. Remain in the testing room at all times during the testing event and monitor all examinee activity as appropriate and in compliance with test security procedures.
5. Ensure that examinees sit at least three to five feet apart and do not talk or seek help from others during the testing event in any way, including use of electronic devices.
6. Refrain from assisting examinees with test answers on any test before or during the testing event.
7. Refrain from reviewing test questions with examinees after the testing event.
8. Ensure that agency staff members follow all specific testing procedures as stated in CASAS Test Administration Manuals.
9. Disallow use of any CASAS assessments as practice tests or as instructional tools.
10. Advise any agency or program to contact CASAS, and not my agency, with any inquiry about sharing or duplicating CASAS testing materials.
11. Refrain from duplicating or in any way reproducing any CASAS testing materials, including but not limited to test booklets, answer keys, answer sheets, CDs, and CASAS e-Tests.

12. Report any violation of this test security policy.

Program Director Signature: _____

CASAS Administrator Signature: _____

Program Name: _____ Date: _____