

**Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments | August 27, 2019**

**TO:** Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) Staff; Local Administrators of WIOA Title II Adult Education provider programs; Local Workforce Development Area Directors

**FROM:** Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning  
Maryland Department of Labor (Labor)

**SUBJECT:** Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments

**PURPOSE:** To provide policy guidance on basic education skills and English language assessments

**ACTION:** Local administrators of WIOA Title II Adult Education provider programs, Local Workforce Development Area directors, DWDAL labor exchange administrators, and central office managers will ensure all employees and existing WIOA Title I Youth Program service providers implement this policy. DWDAL policies are available [on the Labor website](#).

**EFFECTIVE:** July 1, 2019

**EXPIRATION:** June 30, 2020

**QUESTIONS:**

Lloyd Day  
Director  
Office of Workforce Development  
410.767.2995  
[lloyd.day@maryland.gov](mailto:lloyd.day@maryland.gov)

Terry R. Gilleland, Jr.  
Director  
Adult Education & Literacy Services  
410.767.1008  
[terry.gilleland@maryland.gov](mailto:terry.gilleland@maryland.gov)

Lauren Gilwee  
Director  
Policy, DWDAL  
410.767.2268  
[lauren.gilwee@maryland.gov](mailto:lauren.gilwee@maryland.gov)

\*\*\*\*\*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**BASIC EDUCATION SKILLS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENTS**

CANCELLATIONS ..... 3

GENERAL INFORMATION ..... 4

    WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) ..... 4

    NEED FOR ASSESSMENT POLICY ..... 4

        Reliability and Validity ..... 5

MARYLAND’S APPROACH ..... 6

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS ..... 8

    ALLOWABLE BASIC EDUCATION SKILLS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENTS ..... 8

    WHO SHOULD BE ASSESSED? ..... 9

    WHEN SHOULD PARTICIPANTS BE ASSESSED? ..... 9

        Measurable Skill Gains & WIOA Title I ..... 9

TESTING ..... 11

    INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES ..... 11

    PLACEMENT TESTING ..... 11

    PRE-TESTING ..... 12

    POST-TESTING ..... 12

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS ..... 13

TRAINING FOR ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATORS ..... 14

REPORTING & RECORD RETENTION ..... 15

    REPORTING ..... 15

    RECORD RETENTION ..... 15

MONITORING & QUALITY ASSURANCE ..... 16

REFERENCES ..... 17

ATTACHMENT ..... 19

## CANCELLATIONS

The following are hereby **cancelled, replaced, and archived** by this policy issuance:

- Policy Issuance 2019-05, “Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments,” dated April 11, 2019;
- Archived policies are available at: <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/>.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and went into effect July 1, 2015. WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To help both businesses and job seekers meet their needs, the workforce system established under WIOA is integrated by design. WIOA envisions connecting businesses with job seekers, through meaningful partnerships among workforce, education, human services, and economic development entities which ensure optimum results and leveraging of resources. The law addresses the needs of job seekers through establishing a workforce system that helps them access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market. Through American Job Centers (AJCs), WIOA works to address employer needs by matching them to the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

## NEED FOR ASSESSMENT POLICY

The National Reporting System (NRS) was established in coordination with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that learner outcomes are reported systematically across states. Educational gain is a critical indicator of how well states are doing in meeting their goals of preparing WIOA participants for postsecondary education, training, and sustainable employment and self-sufficiency. Programs performing assessment must use Maryland's Assessment Policy in conjunction with the publisher's official examiner's manuals to determine assessment practices. Providers shall follow all guidelines in the publisher's manuals and keep the most current copy of the manuals for each test used by the program.

Educational gain is defined according to NRS educational functioning levels (EFLs), in which participants are assessed based on their ability to perform literacy-related tasks in the specific skill areas of reading, math, and (for English language learners only) speaking and listening. Completion of, or progress within, an EFL is determined by pre-testing and post-testing a participant with a standardized assessment and comparing the results. The NRS levels provide standardized assessment benchmarks.<sup>1</sup> Benchmarks allow WIOA Title I Local Workforce Development Areas (Local Areas) to determine whether participants are sufficiently prepared<sup>2</sup> to enter specific trainings and/or employment. WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers use benchmarks to place participants into appropriate instruction where learners can increase their skills and meet goals for employment and/or further education and training. Using the NRS benchmarks, WIOA program staff can determine when participants have made progress within an education level, completed an education level, and are ready to move to the next education level, training, or job.

Annually, the U.S. Department of Education (DoED) Secretary announces tests, test forms, and delivery formats that the U.S. Secretary of Education has determined to be suitable for use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS). In February 2019, Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) forms 9 & 10, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Life and Work Reading for ABE, and CASAS Life Skills Math expired. TABE 11&12 replaces TABE 9&10, CASAS Reading GOALS Series replaces CASAS Life and Work Reading for ABE for use on paper and through computer-based formats, and CASAS Math GOALS Series replaces CASAS Life Skills

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments*, page 37.

<sup>2</sup> In formulating 2016-2020 WIOA Local Plans, the Governor's Workforce Development Board and Labor required each Local Board to provide: (1) a description of the documentation required to demonstrate a "need for training;" and, (2) a description of how the Local Board will interpret and document eligibility criteria for "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment." Local Plans are available online at <https://www.dllr.state.md.us/wdplan/wioalocalplans.shtml> and will be updated and resubmitted spring 2019.

Math for ABE students. Local Areas and Adult Education Service Providers may continue to use TABE 9&10, CASAS Life and Work Reading, and CASAS Life Skills Math Assessments during a sunset period ending on June 30, 2019. Assessments for English language learners (including CASAS Life and Work Reading ESL), CASAS Life Skills Reading and Listening, TABE CLAS-E and BEST, were extended through February 2, 2021 and sunset June 30, 2021. A complete list is available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2018-09-21/pdf/2018-20590.pdf>.

The NRS has defined a set of six EFL descriptors for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and six for English as a Second Language (ESL):<sup>3</sup>

<b>NRS- Defined Descriptors for Educational Functioning Levels</b>	
<b>Adult Basic Education (ABE)</b>	<b>English as a Second Language (ESL)</b>
ABE Level 1	ESL Level 1
ABE Level 2	ESL Level 2
ABE Level 3	ESL Level 3
ABE Level 4	ESL Level 4
ABE Level 5	ESL Level 5
ABE Level 6	ESL Level 6

Nationwide, all WIOA Title I Local Areas and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers must use standardized pre- and post-tests, where required,<sup>4</sup> to report Measurable Skills Gain according to NRS guidelines. Standardized, ongoing assessment of progress is essential to ensure that all adult and youth learners become proficient in literacy, mathematics, and language skills necessary for self-sufficiency. To ensure compliance, accuracy and consistency, Maryland prescribes that WIOA Title I and II providers use selected assessments that are approved by the NRS.

Documentation that confirms a participant’s completion of an EFL and movement to a higher EFL is an important responsibility of program staff. Accurate pre- and post-testing using a State-approved standardized assessment instrument is the only way to verify the completion of an EFL or movement from one EFL to the next.

**Reliability and Validity**

Information on a participant’s EFL must be collected and reported consistently and reliably among WIOA Title I and Title II providers across the State. Assessment data must meet validity and reliability standards in order to be used in any meaningful way. Data quality begins at the local program level, and by implementing the State assessment policy, Local Areas and local programs will provide the means to allow accurate comparability across all funded programs in the State.

The assessment data is only useful if the information is valid and reliable – collected and reported in the same way by different people in different programs statewide. To ensure validity, only State selected, NRS approved assessments must be used to measure a participant’s EFL. To be reliable, time limits should be followed and directions should be consistent – the same for all programs and within all programs. A Maryland Department of Labor (Labor) Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) audit should be able to verify any data entered by either WIOA Title I or II staff by matching assessment data with supporting documentation

<sup>3</sup> Section 203 of WIOA defines “English Language Acquisition” as the term that applies to an instructional program for English language learners. In the WIOA Final Regulations, “English as a Second Language (ESL)” was determined to be the appropriate term to use when referring to educational functioning levels of English language learners to maintain consistency with NRS information collection and guidelines.

<sup>4</sup> See pages 10-11 for information on Measurable Skill Gains and further details on post-testing requirements for Title I.

in learner files located on site, in either hard copy or electronic form.

## MARYLAND’S APPROACH

Maryland’s WIOA State Plan is Governor Hogan’s blueprint for the creation of an effective and efficient workforce system. Governor Hogan has directed Labor, the Department of Human Resources (DHS), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to work collaboratively to develop a strategic and operational plan to include the following programs:

WIOA State Plan Program	Core WIOA Program as determined by law	Additional WIOA Program as determined by Governor	MD state Agency Responsible for Oversight
Adult Program	•		Labor
Dislocated Workforce Program	•		Labor
Youth Program	•		Labor
Wagner-Peyser Act Program	•		Labor
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program	•		Labor
Vocational Rehabilitation Program	•		MSDE
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program		•	DHS
Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program		•	Labor
Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program		•	Labor
Unemployment Insurance		•	Labor
Senior Community Service Employment Program		•	Labor and Senior Service America, Inc.
Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program		•	N/A**
Community Services Block Grant		•	DHCD
**Formerly known as the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO), USDOL provides oversight of these REO grantees. For more information, visit: <a href="https://www.doleta.gov/reo/">https://www.doleta.gov/reo/</a> .			

Of Labor’s WIOA programs, basic education skills and English language assessments may be administered to participants of the following programs:

- WIOA Title I Adult Program;
- WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program;
- WIOA Title I Youth Program;
- WIOA Title II Adult Education & Family Literacy Act Program (required for NRS reporting); and,
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Program (Trade Program).<sup>5</sup>

Maryland Title I Local Areas (where required) and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers are required by Labor to assess Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners with the:

- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Reading Goals, Math GOALS Series; and/or,

<sup>5</sup> Trade Program participants that require an assessment of basic education skills or English language must be referred by Labor staff to WIOA Title I. WIOA Title I Local Workforce Development Areas must adhere to this policy when assessing Trade Program participants. Assessment results, in turn, must be shared with the appropriate Labor Trade Program staff to determine the appropriate next steps.

- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) 11&12.

WIOA Title I Local Areas (where required) and WIOA II Adult Education Service Providers are required to assess English Language Learners<sup>6</sup> with:

- CASAS Life and Work Reading, CASAS Life and Work Listening; and/or,
- TABE Complete Language Assessment System-English (TABE/CLAS-E); and/or,
- Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Literacy; and/or,
- BEST Plus 2.0.

In a significant step toward overall system improvement, Labor requires its WIOA Title I Local Areas to assess learners with NRS-approved tests, utilizing the same procedures set out in *Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* that WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers also use. These procedures follow NRS guidelines. This is a means to align services and to increase the likelihood that customers will stay engaged with the overall WIOA workforce system. Increased collaboration among WIOA partner programs regarding assessment selection will decrease the likelihood of customers having to complete multiple assessments to achieve the same purpose, and will ultimately create greater efficiency in the overall workforce system.

In an effort to reduce over-assessment of shared participants, to increase efficiencies, and to improve the overall WIOA customer experience, Local Areas, in their Local Plans for the 2016-2020 time period, must address how WIOA Title I Local Areas and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers will coordinate the use of assessments. While Local Plans may address other items relating to the alignment of the coordinated use of assessments, the Local Plan, at minimum, must:

- Outline the agreed upon steps that will be taken to align basic education skills and English language assessments within the local area, including, but not limited to, any Memoranda of Understanding entered into by the workforce development and adult learning partners;
- Identify how assessment scores will be shared among WIOA Title I areas and Title II providers (Consideration must be given to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA));
- Identify who will conduct which of the approved assessments (including for Trade Participants) and when such assessments will be conducted, consistent with this policy;
- Specify how the local area will coordinate testing between workforce development and adult education providers; and,
- Outline how the local area will ensure that test administrators will be trained in accordance with this policy and applicable testing guidelines as set forth by the applicable test publisher.

**Alignment efforts are required and in place, per Local Plans, effective July 1, 2017. The plans were resubmitted spring 2019.**

---

<sup>6</sup> Refers to an eligible individual who has limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending the English language, and: (A) whose native language is a language other than English; or (B) Who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language.

# ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

## ALLOWABLE BASIC EDUCATION SKILLS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENTS

Labor has designated the following NRS-approved assessments as allowable to determine basic skills and/or English language levels:

- CASAS: Reading GOALS Series – ABE learners;
- CASAS: Math GOALS Series – ABE learners;
- CASAS: Life and Work Reading –ESL learners;
- CASAS: Life and Work Listening – ESL learners;
- TABE 11 & 12: Reading, Mathematics, Language – ABE learners;
- TABE CLAS-E: Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening – ESL learners;
- BEST Literacy: Reading/Writing – ESL learners; and
- BEST Plus 2.0: Speaking/Listening – ESL learners.

Labor selected its required assessments based on the premise that the identified assessments are of a high quality and nationally used, but also to help inform services and instruction needed by an individual.

Effective July 1, 2017, Local Areas and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers were required to select assessments within this list. Assessment choice must be based on the skill area or areas that are the focus of instruction for the learner or for another reason specified in the approved WIOA Local Plans.

*Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* provides technical information specific to CASAS, TABE, and BEST, and is the exclusive procedural guidance for Basic Education Skills and English language assessment for WIOA Titles I and II in Maryland.

For any NRS approved assessments, designated staff<sup>7</sup> may also wish to review current editions of the following applicable resources:

- CASAS Resources Catalog (assessment materials and other resources);
- CASAS Test Administration Manual for any CASAS assessment used;
- TABE 11&12 [www.tabetest.com/resources](http://www.tabetest.com/resources);
- BEST Literacy Test Manual;
- BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator’s Guide;
- National External Diploma Program (NEDP) Diagnostic and Assessment Manual, if providing the NEDP (NOTE: NEDP programs will administer all assessments for prospective NEDP participants); and
- MD i-Pathways Manual for Intake/Assessment Specialists (Distance Learning Program).

Programs are also advised to monitor the test developers’ websites for information about new tests in development and other resources. Only NRS approved assessments may be used for reporting.

It is important to keep in mind that a participant’s test score is just one piece of information that tells what a student knows and is able to do in a specific and carefully defined area. While tests and test scores are important, it is also important to remember that any one test score is just that – one test score.

---

<sup>7</sup> For WIOA Title II adult education programs, Intake/Assessment Specialists must be the designated staff.



## WHO SHOULD BE ASSESSED?

All learners who participate in a Maryland adult education program, including NEDP and *MD i-Pathways* Distance Education, shall be assessed.

Each of Maryland's 12 Local Areas must specify in their WIOA Local Plan which subset of their overall workforce customers, including Trade Program participants and youth, will be assessed. It is important to note that requiring in school youth to receive further academic assessments outside of the school system is redundant since it is the responsibility of the local school districts to ensure proper academic assessment of in-school youth. In school youth already undergo a number of assessments within the school system in order to comply with state standards of learning.

## WHEN SHOULD PARTICIPANTS BE ASSESSED?

When an assessment is required, WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers and Local Areas must assess with the following frequency:

### When Learners Are Assessed

WHEN	WHAT	PURPOSE
Prior to the commencement of instruction or training services <sup>8</sup>	Placement test	Determine pre-test level
	Pre-test	Determine entry EFL Guide instruction
After 70-100 hours of instruction Minimum of 40 ( <i>CASAS</i> ); 40 ( <i>TABE and 11 &amp; 12, all levels except ABE levels 5-6</i> ); 30 ( <i>TABE 11 &amp; 12 ABE levels 5-6</i> ); 40 ( <i>TABE CLAS-E</i> ); 60 ( <i>BEST</i> )	Post-test	Determine update EFL Guide instruction

Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pre-test for the next reporting period, provided that the interim does not exceed four (4) months. Similarly, learners who have “stopped-out”<sup>9</sup> of an instructional program for more than four (4) months, must be administered a new pre-test upon return in order to assure proper placement in the program. That pre-test should be of the same level but of a different form from the previous pre-test.

## Measurable Skill Gains & WIOA Title I

To meet USDOL performance reporting requirements, WIOA Title I Local Areas<sup>10</sup> must report on participants' “Measurable Skill Gains.” This WIOA performance measure accounts for the percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving Measurable Skill Gains. “Measurable Skill Gains” are defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress towards such a credential or employment. This measure is intended to capture important progressions through pathways that offer different services based on program purposes and participant needs. Progress made towards this measure can help fulfill the vision for a workforce system that serves a diverse set of individuals with a range of services tailored to individual needs and goals.

Depending on the type of education or training program, all WIOA Title I Local Areas must document Measurable Skill

<sup>8</sup> Includes MD i-Pathways proxy contact hours using the Clock Time Model.

<sup>9</sup> The term “stop out” refers to a student withdrawing temporarily from a program and then returning at a later date to complete instructional goals.

<sup>10</sup> WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers must also report on Measurable Skill Gains to meet federal reporting requirements. However, Title II providers do not have the same flexibility and options on how Measurable Skill Gains are measured.

Gain progress in one of the following five ways:

1. Documented achievement of at least one EFL of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;
2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the Maryland Higher Education Commission academic standards;
4. Satisfactory or better progress report towards established milestones, such as completion of On-the-Job Training (OJT) or completion of one year of a Registered Apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or,
5. Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks, such as knowledge-based exams.

For a low-skilled adult participant of an adult education program, the Measurable Skills Gain indicator provides an opportunity to track and report achievement of a high school diploma or gains in reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency.

When documenting the EFL of a participant who is receiving instruction below the post-secondary level (#1 above), Maryland requires its WIOA Title I Local Areas to measure EFL by comparing the participant's initial EFL, as measured by a pre-test, with the participant's subsequent EFL, as measured by a post-test.<sup>11</sup> Title II Measurable Skill Gains must be documented by:

1. Documented achievement of at least one EFL of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary level;
2. Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; or
3. Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that demonstrates that the participant is meeting the Maryland Higher Education Commission academic standards.

All pre-testing and post-testing must be conducted in accordance with this Policy Issuance.

---

<sup>11</sup> Through TEGL 10-16, Change 1, page 19, USDOL allows states the flexibility to also measure Title I participants' EFL gain in two other ways: (1) When an individual is in secondary school at participation, exits the program, and is in Post-Secondary Education later during that same Program Year, then this counts as an EFL gain for WIOA Title I reporting purposes; and (2) by offering adult high school programs that lead to a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent to measure and report educational gain through the awarding of credits or Carnegie units. The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article 9.7-101 et seq. authorizes the Adult High School Pilot Program, effective July 2017.

## TESTING

In general, all participants must be assessed using a placement test and pre-test in the manner specified by the test publisher and within this policy.

For WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers, all participants must be assessed at entry and post-tested at least once during the fiscal year, provided they accumulate sufficient instructional hours to warrant post testing. If a student is attending class at the end of the fiscal year and continues in the program at the beginning of the next fiscal year, the hours of instruction from the previous year carry over and count toward the post-testing requirement in the new program year.

The sharing of information is essential to aligning and integrating programs under WIOA and, therefore, Labor requires its local Title I Local Areas and Title II Adult Education Service Providers to share test results for co-enrolled participants (including pre- and post-test scores). As mentioned on pages 7-8, while still adhering to FERPA, WIOA Local Plans must identify how assessment scores will be shared on the local level.

*Attachment A– Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* provides the scoring scales for assessments approved by Labor, as they relate to NRS EFLs. Scores below ABE level 5 are considered to be Basic Skills Deficient. Per WIOA Section 3(5), an individual is to be considered Basic Skills Deficient if he or she is an individual: (1) who is a youth, that has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or, (2) who is a youth or adult that is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society. The primary method for determining whether an individual is Basic Skills Deficient is through basic education skills assessment, as detailed within this policy. A Local Area may, when appropriate, alternatively determine that someone is Basic Skills Deficient through observation, participation in a secondary school’s ESL program, or evidence of skills deficiency presented in a secondary school Individualized Education Program, when appropriate for that individual’s needs and goals.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES

Assessment materials are copyrighted and shall not be duplicated. Duplication of copyrighted materials will expose programs to legal and financial penalties. Materials shall be purchased directly from CASAS, Data Recognition Corporation/CTB, or the Center for Applied Linguistics. See *Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments*, page 15 for contact information.

## PLACEMENT TESTING

A placement test<sup>12</sup> must always be administered to determine the level of pre-test to administer, unless the learner:

- Has a placement test history record current within 12 months (example: CASAS, TABE, BEST);
- Is being screened for enrollment in the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) or MD i-Pathways Distance Learning, (For potential i-Pathways participants, a CASAS C or D level or TABE D or A level reading and math pre-tests are the standard tests used);
- Has limited literacy skills or has limited ability to understand or speak English; (Determined at intake by staff observation, CASAS ELA short oral interview, TABE *Word List* or self-reported with appropriate

---

<sup>12</sup> CASAS placement tests are called —Appraisals, the TABE placement test is called the —Locator Test, BEST Plus 2.0 print-based version placement test is called —Locator, and there are no placement tests for the BEST Literacy and the BEST Plus 2.0 CAV.

- documentation.); or
- Will be administered the BEST Literacy or BEST Plus 2.0 CAV.

## PRE-TESTING

Pre-testing is vital in order to effectively assess the participant's entry EFL. As such, pre-tests for both WIOA Title I Youth programming and adult education services must be administered as soon as possible during intake. In any event, a pre-test must take place prior to the commencement of instruction, or when deemed appropriate by a WIOA Title I Local Area, as described in the approved WIOA Local Plan.<sup>13</sup>

Participants do not need to be assessed in all of the areas described in the level descriptors. The local programs must decide the skill areas most relevant to each participant's needs or the program's curriculum, training, or prospective job, and assess participants in these areas. Initial placement for a program year may be set using any subject area of pretests given. If, as a result of the pre-test score, a tester is referred to adult education, the pre-test score shall be used to help guide instructors to develop a learning plan that meets the learner's goals and needs.

Refer to *Attachment A –Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* for instruction on when to administer a pre-test.

## POST-TESTING

A post-test must be administered to participants to determine their progress in either adult education instruction and/or the WIOA Title I Youth program<sup>14</sup>. The post-test should document whether the participant has completed one or more EFLs. If more than one skill area was assessed during entry pre- testing, a Measurable Skills Gain may be measured with a post test in any subject area in which a participant was pre-tested. NEDP and WIOA Title I programs do not typically require post-testing, unless appropriate. Title II recipients are required to meet a post testing standard of 70 percent.

WIOA Title I Local Areas should refer to pages 10-11 on Measurable Skill Gains for further guidance.

---

<sup>13</sup> See *Attachment A –Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* for placement test exceptions.

<sup>14</sup> All in-school youth are subject to the requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education's High School Assessment Program, which measure the youth's progress toward high school competency standards in English, Algebra/Data Analysis, Government, and Biology. Requiring additional testing for this population would increase burden on participants and would be duplicative of the services that they are receiving in the secondary school system itself.

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

Under Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and related regulations, WIOA Title I and II providers must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship. Accommodations are available to participants with legally protected disabilities. Accommodations are not designed to lower expectations for performance; rather, they are designed to mitigate the effects of a disability and to level the playing field. An individual with a record for a substantially limiting impairment may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation or reasonable modification if needed and related to the past disability.

In those circumstances where a WIOA Title I or II provider believes that the proposed accommodation would cause undue hardship, the provider has the burden of proving that the accommodation would result in such hardship. The decision must be accompanied by a written statement of the provider's reasons for reaching that conclusion. The provider must provide a copy of the statement of reasons to the individual or individuals who requested the accommodation. If a requested accommodation would result in undue hardship, the provider must, after consultation with an individual with a disability (or individuals with disabilities), take any other action that would not result in such hardship, but would nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, individuals with disabilities receive the service provided.

Unless making the modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity, the provider must also make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability.

WIOA Title I and II providers are required to document any accommodation requests and any meeting regarding the disposition of requests in accordance with Section 188 regulations.

*Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* provides instruction on properly identifying and documenting participants who require accommodations.

## **TRAINING FOR ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATORS**

Labor requires all assessment administrators, including Local Area staff, WIOA Title I Youth Program service providers, and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers, to be properly trained on assessing participants for basic education skills and English language. *Attachment A – Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Skills & English Language Assessments* provides training requirements for assessment administrators.

# **REPORTING & RECORD RETENTION**

## **REPORTING**

All assessment results must be entered into the appropriate Labor database in a timely manner.

For Local Areas and WIOA Title I Youth Program service providers, the Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) is the appropriate database and data must be entered within 14 days of activity.

For WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers, the LACES system is the appropriate database and data must be entered according to the posted *Annual Data Entry Schedule*.

## **RECORD RETENTION**

In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Maryland requires Local Areas and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers to retain assessment records in the learner's file and maintain the file in hard copy or electronic form for at least three years following the date on which the final cost report charged to a program year's allotment is submitted, or until all audit and litigation issues are resolved, whichever is later. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the expiration of the three-year period, the records then must be retained until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action has been taken.

## MONITORING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The State of Maryland acknowledges that the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education have the authority to monitor and assess the use of basic education skills and English language assessments to ensure that Federal awards are used for authorized purposes in compliance with Final Rules, federal regulations, and State policies, and that those laws and regulations are enforced properly.

To ensure that policies are being followed and expectations are being met, Local Areas, WIOA Title I Youth Program service providers, and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers should also expect DWDAL to conduct program monitoring. Where needed, data quality site visits shall be conducted and technical assistance shall be provided.

All assessment administrators shall be monitored to assure that the following misuses of tests do not occur:

- Teaching to the actual test item;
- Copying and distributing a test item or test booklet to unauthorized personnel or learners prior to or after test administration as a study guide;
- Administering a lower level test to artificially increase the learning gain between pre-tests and post-tests;
- Administering pre-/post-tests in quick succession without sufficient time for instruction to allow for learning gains;
- Reducing the amount of time allowed 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 score;
- Deleting accurate tests to manipulate learning gains;
- Altering test items or score information;
- Providing the answers to test questions;
- Translating test items and answers into another language;
- Excluding certain individuals or groups from pre- and post-testing;
- Administering the test by an individual who is not qualified to do so; and/or
- Duplicating or copying the test of one learner and replacing the identification number of another number.



## REFERENCES

### LAW

- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\), 29 U.S.C. § 3101 et seq. \(2015\);](#)
- [Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act \(FERPA\) of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.](#)

### REGULATION

- Federal Register – Volume 83, Number 45, page 8322 [Tests Determined to be Suitable for Use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education](#), dated March 7, 2019;
- 29 CFR 97.42, “[Retention and access requirements for records;](#)”
- 29 CFR 95.53, “[Retention and access requirements for records;](#)”
- 34 CFR 462, “[Measuring Educational Gain in the National Reporting System for Adult Education.](#)”
- Federal Register – Volume 83, Number 184, page 47910 [Tests Determined to be Suitable for Use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education](#), dated September 21, 2018;
- Federal Register – Volume 83, Number 24, page 5087 [Tests Determined to be Suitable for Use in the National Reporting System for Adult Education](#), dated February 5, 2018;
- Federal Register – [Volume 80, Number 73, page 20574](#), dated April 16, 2015 (Joint NPRM Proposed Rules);
- Federal Register – Volume 80, Number 73, 34 CFR Parts 362 and 463, —[Programs and Activities Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act \(Title II or the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act\)](#), dated April 16, 2015;
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [Section 80.40\(b\)\(1\) of Title 34](#): Monitoring and reporting program performance;
- 34 CFR [§ 80.40\(b\)\(1\)](#): Financial reporting;
- 34 CFR [Part 99](#): Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations;
- WIOA Final Regulations (Federal Register Vol. 81, No. 161, August 19, 2016);
- WIOA Section 188 Regulations (29 CFR Part 38).

### FEDERAL GUIDANCE

- Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-16, Change 1, “[Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs](#),” dated August 23, 2017;
- USDOL TEGL 21-16, [Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance](#), dated March 2, 2017;
- USDOL TEGL 4-15, [Vision for the One-Stop Delivery System under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#), dated August 13, 2015;
- USDOL TEGL 39-11, “[Guidance on Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information \(PII\)](#),” dated June 28, 2012;
- USDOL TEGL 18-11, [Improving Literacy and Numeracy Gains of Workforce Investment Act \(WIA\) Youth Program Participants](#), dated March 2, 2012;
- USDOL TEGL 31-10, [Increasing Enrollment and Improving Services to Youth with Disabilities](#), dated June 13, 2011;
- USDOL TEGL 17-05, [Common Measures Policy for the Employment and Training Administration’s Performance Accountability System and Related Performance Issues](#), dated February 17, 2006.

### OTHER REFERENCES

- National Reporting System, [State Assessment Policy Guidance](#), dated November 6, 2015;
- Literacy Works website (<https://lwis.dllr.state.md.us/>);
- NRS website (<http://www.nrsweb.org/>);
- CASAS website (<http://www.casas.org/>);
- TABE website (<http://tabetest.com/>);
- Center for Applied Linguistics website (*BEST Literacy & BEST Plus 2.0*) (<http://www.cal.org/>);
- WIOA Technical Document 2016-01, [Definitions for WIOA Implementation](#);
- National Reporting System, [State Assessment Policy Guidance](#), dated August 9, 2018  
<https://nrsweb.org/resources/state-assessment-policy-guidance-508-compliant-version>.

# **ATTACHMENT**

ATTACHMENT A — Maryland Procedural Manual for Basic Education Skills & English Language Assessment

# Maryland Procedural Manual for the Assessment of Basic Skills & English Language Acquisition

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW .....	4
PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT .....	4
Use of Informal Assessments .....	5
SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT POLICY .....	5
RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE .....	5
GENERAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS.....	6
PARTICIPANTS TO BE ASSESSED .....	6
ASSESSMENTS APPROVED FOR NRS REPORTING .....	6
TRAINING FOR ADMINISTERING ASSESSMENTS.....	9
ASSESSMENT RESOURCES .....	10
OTHER ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS .....	10
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES OR OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS.....	11
Procedure for Identifying Learners Who Require Accommodations.....	11
Proper Documentation.....	12
GUIDELINES FOR EACH ASSESSMENT .....	13
PLACEMENT TESTING FOR ALL ASSESSMENTS .....	13
PRE-TESTING AND POST-TESTING FOR ALL ASSESSMENTS .....	14
<i>MD i-Pathways</i> Distance Learners.....	14
MD National External Diploma Program Learners.....	15
RARE Post-testing Time Exception .....	15
Matched Pair .....	15
Purchasing Procedures .....	16
CASAS ASSESSMENTS .....	16
Overview.....	16
Test Administration Procedures .....	17
Training Requirements.....	17
Accurate Range.....	18
BEST ASSESSMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION LEARNERS.....	20
BEST Literacy Overview.....	20
Overview.....	20
Test Administration Procedures.....	21
Training Requirements.....	21
TABE ASSESSMENTS.....	23
TABE 11&12.....	23
Overview.....	23
Test Administration Procedures .....	23
Pre and Post Testing Recommendations for NRS Reporting .....	24
Support Materials .....	25
TABE Complete Language Assessment-English (TABE CLAS-E) .....	27
Test Administration .....	27
Scoring .....	28
GED <sup>®</sup> TESTS AND GED Ready <sup>®</sup> .....	29
QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES .....	29
APPENDICES .....	31

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION STANDARDS CHECKLIST .....	32
MARYLAND APPROVED ASSESSMENTS.....	34
EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVELS, TEST BENCHMARKS, AND FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTORS.....	36
Blended and Distance Learning.....	42
GLOSSARY .....	46

### **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Scale Scores for NRS/Maryland Approved Assessments Related to NRS Educational Functioning Levels. ....	8
Table 2: Staff Training Schedule.....	9
Table 3: Pre-testing and Post-testing Timeframes.....	14
Table 4: Examples of a Matched Pair.....	16
Table 5: CASAS Placement Testing for ELA Learners.....	18
Table 6: CASAS Life & Work Assessment Series (ESL only).....	19
Table 7: CASAS Reading GOALS Series.....	20
Table 8: BEST Approved Assessments.....	22
Table 9: BEST Literacy Assessment Series .....	22
Table 10: BEST PLUS 2.0 Assessment Series.....	22
Table 11: TABE Approved Assessments .....	23
Table 12: TABE 11 & 12 Levels L, E, M, D, and A Maximum Allowable Testing Times .....	24
Table 13: Grade Range Scale Score Guidance.....	25
Table 14: TABE CLAS-E Item Count and Test Times.....	27
Table 15: TABE CLAS-E Locator Administration.....	28
Table 16: Scale Scores for TABE-CLAS-E .....	29

## OVERVIEW

### PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

Generally speaking, the purpose of assessment is to provide valid information for making educational decisions. The primary decisions are those made by the learner and teacher regarding the learner's needs, goals, and progress. However, many other types of decisions based on assessment results extend beyond the classroom: For example, program directors at the local, state, or and federal levels can use assessment results to

- document continuous program improvement,
- guide program management and activities,
- guide professional development planning and implementation,
- set standards,
- monitor the quality of education,
- inform policymaking,
- reward or sanction various practices,
- justify funding, and
- communicate performance results to various constituencies.

Assessments can be used for both accountability and instruction. Measurement issues become more important as the stakes attached to assessments increase. When an assessment is used for accountability, it must be *standardized*.

A standardized test differs from an *informal* test in that the latter does not follow a fixed set of conditions. For instance, in a standardized reading test, the same reading materials are read by different learners following the same procedures, answering the same types of questions and observing the same time limits. The purpose of the standard conditions is to try to hold constant all factors other than the ability under study so that the inference drawn about that ability is *valid*, that is, true or correct.

Standardized tests are particularly useful for making comparisons. They let us compare a person's ability at one time to that person's ability at a second time, as in pre- and post-testing. They also permit comparisons among programs. However, for the tests to give valid results for making such comparisons, they must be administered according to the standard conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Programs performing assessment must use Maryland's Assessment Policy in conjunction with the publisher's official examiner's manuals to determine assessment practices. Providers shall follow all guidelines in the publisher's manuals and keep the most current copy of the manuals for each test used by the program.

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Sticht (1999). *Testing and Accountability in Adult Education*. El Cajon, CA: Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc.

## **Use of Informal Assessments**

In addition to the required, standardized tests for accountability, Maryland Department of Labor (Labor) encourages local providers to use a variety of informal assessments to assist in informing instruction and progress toward educational goals. These may include:

- Performance samples – such as writing samples, journals, worksheets, audiotapes, projects, and demonstration of a task
- Informal reading inventory
- Learner self-evaluation
- Learning plans & logs
- GED Ready<sup>®</sup>
- Additional standardized tests
- Computer-generated assessments – such as by topic or subject area
- Textbook tests
- Teacher-designed tests
- Interviews and teacher observations – dated anecdotal record

Keep in mind that a participant's test score is just one piece of information that demonstrates what the person is able to do in a specific and carefully defined area. While tests and test scores are important, it is also important to remember that any one test score is just that – one test score.

## **SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT POLICY**

All assessments approved for use in WIOA funded programs in Maryland are appropriate for NRS reporting. The use of these standardized tests is designed to assess learning along a continuum from beginning literacy and English language acquisition through completion of secondary level skills. Programs should select the test instrument that best meets the learner's goals and instructional focus of the program.

Subsequent sections of this document cover additional details on assessment including general assessment practices, training requirements, accommodations for individuals with disabilities a description of Maryland approved assessment instruments, quality control procedures and supplemental materials.

## **RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE**

### **State Staff:**

Helen Coupe

Maryland Department of Labor

Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning 410-767-0631

[helen.coupe@maryland.gov](mailto:helen.coupe@maryland.gov)



**Websites:**

- Literacy Works website (<https://lwis.dllr.state.md.us/>)
- NRS website (<http://www.nrsweb.org/>)
- CASAS website (<http://www.casas.org/>)
- TABE website (<http://tabetest.com/>)
- Center for Applied Linguistics website (*BEST Literacy & BEST Plus 2.0*) (<http://www.cal.org/>)

**GENERAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**  
**PARTICIPANTS TO BE ASSESSED**

All students in the Maryland adult education programs, including those enrolled in distance learning classes will be assessed with the state designated assessments—CASAS, *TABE*, *TABE CLAS-E*, *BEST Literacy*, or *BEST Plus 2.0*. Local workforce providers will assess youth program participants and adult customers as appropriate.

All participants must be included in the appropriate state database (LACES for Title II and MWE for Title I providers.)

Assessment results must be reported in the database in a timely manner.

**ASSESSMENTS APPROVED FOR NRS REPORTING**

Approved assessments in Maryland are:

- *CASAS Life and Work Reading*- English as a Second Language (ESL);
- *CASAS Life and Work Listening*- English as a Second Language (ESL);
- *CASAS Reading GOALS Series*- Adult Basic Education (ABE);
- *CASAS Math GOALS Series*- Adult Basic Education (ABE);
- *Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE 11 & 12)* Reading, Language and Math- Adult Basic Education (ABE);
- *Test of Adult Basic Education Complete Language Assessment System-English (TABE CLAS-E)*-Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening- English as a Second Language (ESL);
- *BEST Literacy*- Reading and Writing- English as a Second Language (ESL); and
- *BEST Plus 2.0*- Speaking and Listening- English as a Second Language (ESL).

Assessments within these test systems:

- Are appropriate for measuring literacy and language development of adult learners,
- Have standardized administration and scoring procedures and alternate, equivalent forms for pre and post testing and,
- Have evidence linking them to NRS educational functioning levels.

Additional information on these assessments is included in Section 3,

*Guidelines for Each Assessment.*

**Table 1: Scale Scores for NRS/Maryland Approved Assessments Related to NRS Educational Functioning Levels.**

ABE NRS EFL	<u>CASAS Reading</u>	<u>CASAS Math</u>	<u>TABE 11 &amp; 12</u>	<u>TABE 11&amp;12</u>		<u>TABE 11 &amp; 12</u>	
	<u>GOALS</u> Scale Score Ranges	<u>GOALS</u> Scale Score Ranges	Scale Score Ranges (Reading)	Scale Score Ranges (Math)		Scale Score Ranges (Language)	
ABE Level 1	203 and below	193 and below	300-441	300-448		300-457	
ABE Level 2	204-216	194-203	442-500	449-495		458-510	
ABE Level 3	217-227	204-214	501-535	496-536		511-546	
ABE Level 4	228-238	215-225	536-575	537-595		547-583	
ABE Level 5	239-248	226-235	576-616	584-630		584-630	
ABE Level 6	249 and above	236 and above	617-800	657-800		631-800	
ESL NRS EFL	<u>CASAS Reading</u> Scale Score Ranges	<u>CASAS Listening</u> Scale Score Ranges	<u>TABE CLAS-E</u>		<u>BEST</u>		
			Scale Score Ranges	Scale Score Ranges	Literacy	Plus 2.0	
ESL Level 1	180 and below	180 & below	225-394	230-407	0-20	88-361	
ESL Level 2	181-190	181-189	395-441	408-449	21-52	362-427	
ESL Level 3	191-200	190-199	442-482	450-485	53-63	428-452	
ESL Level 4	201-210	200-209	483-514	486-525	64-67	453-484	
ESL Level 5	211-220	210-218	515-556	526-558	68-75	485-524	
ESL Level 6	221-235	219-227	557-600	559-600	76-78	525-564	

Scores below ABE Level 5 are considered Basic Skills Deficient. Per WIOA Section 3(5), individuals are regarded as Basic Skills Deficient if they are: (1) youth with English language, reading, writing or computing skills at or below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level on a generally accepted standardized test, or (2) youth or adults who are unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, as a family member, or in society.

## **TRAINING FOR ADMINISTERING ASSESSMENTS**

Labor requires all Title I and Title II assessment administrators including Youth Program service providers to be properly trained before administering standardized assessments. Programs must comply with all training requirements established by the test publisher, including education and other minimum requirements.

Certified state assessment trainers will train new staff including Intake/Assessment, Instructional Specialist and designated workforce staff who will then deliver administration and interpretation procedures for all approved assessments to local programs. **Exception: All BEST Plus 2.0 training shall be conducted at the state level by certified trainers.** Training must include NRS policy, accountability policies, and data collection; definition of measures; and guidelines for assessment administration.

All program staff who administer any CASAS assessment are required to complete the CASAS *Initial Implementation Training* (IIT) offered online prior to administering any CASAS assessment.

**Table 2: Staff Training Schedule**

WHO	BY WHOM	WHEN	
		Initial	Update
State Trainers	CASAS, TABE or BEST	Upon hire	Every two years
WIOA Title II Intake/Assessment	State Trainer & Online IIT	Upon hire	Every two years
WIOA Title II Instructional Specialists	State Trainer & Online IIT	Upon hire	Every two years
WIOA Title II ELA Lead Teachers	State Trainer & Online IIT	Upon hire	Every two years
WIOA Title II Local Program Staff	CASAS Online IIT, Intake/Assessment Specialist, Instructional Specialist and/or ELA Lead Teacher	Upon hire	Every two years
WIOA Title I Local Program Staff	CASAS Online IIT or Intake/Assessment Specialist, Instructional Specialist and/or ELA Lead Teacher from a Title II program	Prior to delivering assessments	Every two years

State and local program staff are responsible for maintaining a record for each assessment training they conduct. This will include original agendas, sign-in sheets, and evaluations in hard-copy or electronic form. State adult education staff will enter state training data and local WIOA Title II program staff will enter local program training data in the staff person's LACES personnel record. WIOA Title I providers must be prepared to share training data on staff upon Labor or USDOL request.

### **ASSESSMENT RESOURCES**

For any assessment used, staff members with assessment duties will maintain and obtain guidance from **current** copies of:

- CASAS Resources Catalog (assessment materials and other resources);
- CASAS Test Administration Manual for any CASAS assessment used;
- TABE 11&12 [www.tabetest.com/resources](http://www.tabetest.com/resources);
- BEST Literacy Test Manual;
- BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator's Guide;
- National External Diploma Program (NEDP) Diagnostic and Assessment Manual, if providing the NEDP (NOTE: NEDP programs will administer all assessments for prospective NEDP participants); and
- MD i-Pathways Manual for Intake/Assessment Specialists (Distance Learning Program).

Programs are also advised to monitor the test developers' websites where they can find postings of any changes, information about new tests in development, and other resources. Only NRS approved assessments may be used for testing.

### **OTHER ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

- For Title II programs, at least seventy percent (70%) of learners must have a valid matched pair of pre-/post- tests for the fiscal year.
- In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Maryland requires participating programs to retain assessment records in the learner's file and maintain the file in hard copy or electronic form for at least three years following the date on which the final cost report charged to a program year's allotment is submitted, or until all audit and litigation issues are resolved, whichever is later. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the expiration of the three-year period, the records then must be retained until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action has been taken.

**All learner records shall be secured in locked files. With the increased concern about identity theft, sensitivity to the availability of personal information, and legal requirements as reflected in the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* it is extremely important that programs maintain strict adherence to data security issues. Intake and assessment forms, related paperwork, and other documents that may contain information such as learners' Social Security numbers should be shredded or otherwise appropriately destroyed after the three year storage time limit.**

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES OR OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS**

Under Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and related regulations, WIOA Title I and II providers must provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, unless providing the accommodation would cause undue hardship.<sup>2</sup> Accommodations are available to participants with legally protected disabilities. Accommodations are not designed to lower expectations for performance; rather, they are designed to mitigate the effects of a disability and to level the playing field. An individual with a record for a substantially limiting impairment may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation or reasonable modification if needed and related to the past disability.

In those circumstances where a WIOA Title I or II provider believes that the proposed accommodation would cause undue hardship, the provider has the burden of proving that the accommodation would result in such hardship. The decision must be accompanied by a written statement of the recipient's reasons for reaching that conclusion. The recipient must provide a copy of the statement of reasons to the individual or individuals who requested the accommodation. If a requested accommodation would result in undue hardship, the provider must, after consultation with an individual with a disability (or individuals with disabilities), take any other action that would not result in such hardship, but would nevertheless ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, individuals with disabilities receive the service provided.

Unless making the modification would fundamentally alter<sup>3</sup> the nature of the service, program, or activity, the provider must also make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability.

Educational testing must take into consideration both the principles of standardization (e.g. test administration procedures required by test publishers) and inclusion for all participants. WIOA Title I and II providers are required to document any accommodation requests and any meeting regarding the disposition of requests in accordance with Section 188 rules.

### **Procedure for Identifying Learners Who Require Accommodations**

Identification shall occur during intake. Disabilities may be initially observed or self-reported but must

---

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Equal Opportunity regulations, “undue hardship” means significant difficulty or expense incurred by a WIOA Title I or II provider, when considered in light of the following factors: (A) The nature and net cost of the accommodation needed, taking into consideration the availability of tax credits and deductions, and/or outside funding, for the accommodation; (B) The overall financial resources of the facility or facilities involved in the provision of the reasonable accommodation, including: (1) The number of persons aided, benefited, served, or trained by, or employed at, the facility or facilities; and (2) The effect the accommodation would have on the expenses and resources of the facility or facilities; (C) The overall financial resources of the WIOA Title I or II provider, including: (1) The overall size of the recipient; (2) The number of persons aided, benefited, served, trained, or employed by the recipient; and (3) The number, type and location of the recipient's facilities; (D) The type of operation or operations of the recipient, including: (1) The geographic separateness and administrative or fiscal relationship of the facility or facilities in question to the recipient; and (2) Where the individual is seeking an employment-related accommodation, the composition, structure and functions of the recipient's workforce; and (E) The impact of the accommodation upon the operation of the facility or facilities, including: (1) The impact on the ability of other participants to receive aid, benefits, services, or training, or of other employees to perform their duties; and (2) The impact on the facility's ability to carry out its mission. The provider must make the decision that the accommodation would cause such hardship only after considering all factors listed above.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with Equal Opportunity regulations, “Fundamental alteration” means: (1) A change in the essential nature of a program or activity, including but not limited to an aid, service, benefit, or training; or (2) A cost that a recipient can demonstrate would result in an undue burden.

be supported by proper documentation.

## **Proper Documentation**

Documentation must provide a comprehensive evaluation, a specific diagnosis, and objective evidence of a substantial functional limitation. The diagnostic report must include specific recommendations for accommodation(s), as well as a detailed explanation of why each accommodation is recommended. The evaluator(s) must describe the impact the diagnosed disability has on a specific major life activity as well as the degree of recommendations with specific test results or clinical observations. This evaluation must be made by a qualified professional whose credentials are appropriate to the disability. The name, title, and professional credentials (e.g., degrees, areas of specification, license or certification, employment) should be clearly stated in the documentation.

If a learner is found eligible for appropriate academic adjustments related to accommodations, it will be the program's responsibility to cover costs associated with the recommended accommodations *provided such costs are available within the overall financial resources of the program involved.*

Scale scores for individuals who are provided accommodations should be referenced according to the same standards as participants who are tested without an accommodation, however, interpretation of results should take into consideration the accommodation used (e.g. the examinee scored at the ABE Level 5 in the math assessment when permitted to use a calculator).

Assessment accommodations will be based upon the nature of the disability or special need and can include, but are not limited to:

- Braille Test Edition – for learners who are proficient in this mode of access to written material. Test administrator must transfer Braille answers to a scorable answer document.
- Large Print Edition – an enlarged copy of the regular print edition. Learners who use the large print edition should be allowed to mark their answers on a large print answer sheet.
- Repeated Directions – The test administrator may repeat the directions for learners who have difficulty following or attending to directions.
- Assistive Technology – Can include but is not limited to a computer, tape recorder, calculator, abacus, grip for a pencil, visual magnification device, communication device, mask or marker to maintain place, speech synthesizer, and electronic reader.
- Answers Recorded – If unable to write, provisions must be made for the test administrator to record the learner's answers on the scorable answer document. Scribes and others supporting a learner's test-taking must be neutral in responding to the learner during test administration. Assistance in test administration must not give away the answers. The learner's responses must accurately represent his or her own choices.
- Extended Time/Adjusted Time – Time may be adjusted for certain learners, such as those who have short attention spans or who may be unable to concentrate for long periods of time on a given task. The test administration time may have to be altered considerably to allow for intermittent short breaks during the testing period, or it may be determined appropriate to administer the test in a number of short sessions. Testing may also be stopped and continued at a later time if a learner's behavior interferes with testing. The elapsed time must be documented and the test administrator must closely monitor that test security is maintained. The time of day the test is administered may also be adjusted.
- Communication Assistance – A test administrator who is fluent in the cuing or signing

modality routinely used by the learner should be available to repeat or clarify test directions.

Detailed information about accommodations and alternate test forms can be found on the CASAS and TABE websites [www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org) and <http://tabetest.com/>. The design of BEST Literacy and BEST Plus 2.0 assessments allows for only limited accommodations. You may refer to the CAL website [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org) for this information.

For further information, local staff should contact their designated 504 Coordinator for their organization, Labor-DWDAL Specialist for Special Needs Populations (Title II) or the Labor-DWDAL Disability and Youth Services Coordinator (Title I).

## **GUIDELINES FOR EACH ASSESSMENT**

All learners must be assessed at entry and post-tested at least once during the fiscal year, provided they accumulate sufficient instructional hours to warrant post-testing. If a learner continues instruction after a post-test has been administered, that post-test can be used as the pre-test for the learner's next test battery.

### **PLACEMENT TESTING FOR ALL ASSESSMENTS**

A placement test (e.g. CASAS Appraisal or TABE Locator) is used to determine the correct level of pre-test and select short and long-term instructional goals. All programs are required to administer a placement test unless the participant:

- Has a current placement test (within 12 months).
- Is being screened for enrollment in the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) or MD i-Pathways Distance Learning
- Has limited literacy skills or has limited ability to understand or speak English, determined at intake by staff observation, (e.g. with CASAS ELA short oral interview or TABE *Word List*) or self-reported with appropriate documentation; or
- Will be administered the BEST Literacy or BEST Plus 2.0 CAV.

Students who are placed at an instructional level that is not appropriate for their ability, may be frustrated or bored and exit the program prematurely. An accurate pre-test helps provide accurate baseline information to inform instruction and monitor progress. Placement tests may not be used as the pre- or post-test assessment.



**PRE-TESTING AND POST-TESTING FOR ALL ASSESSMENTS**

The scale score results of placement testing will indicate the appropriate level pre-test to administer.

**Table 3: Pre-testing and Post-testing Timeframes**

WHAT	WHEN		PURPOSE
<b>Pre-test</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-testing must be completed prior to the commencement of instruction or training services.</li> <li>Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pre-test for the next reporting period, provided that the interim does not exceed four (4) months. Similarly, learners who have dropped out or “stopped-out” of an instructional program for more than four (4) months, must be administered a new pre-test upon return in order to assure proper placement in the program. That pre-test should be the same level but a different form from the previous pre-test.</li> <li>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. Initial placement may be set using any subject area of pre-tests given.</li> </ol>		Determine entry EFL Guide instruction
<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Hours of Instruction between Pre-test and Post-test</b>		Determine update EFL Guide instruction
	<b>Recommended</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	
	70-100 hours	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>CASAS</b>, 40 hours</li> <li><b>TABE, ABE levels 1-4</b>, 40 hours</li> <li><b>TABE, ABE levels 5-6</b>, 30 hours</li> <li><b>TABE CLAS-E</b>, 40 hours</li> <li><b>TABE CLAS-E</b>, 40 hours</li> <li><b>BEST</b>, 60 hours</li> </ul> </li> <li>If more than one skill area was assessed during entry pre-testing, a Measurable Skills Gain may be measured with a post test in any subject area in which a participant was pre-tested.</li> <li>The <i>MD i-Pathways</i> Distance Learning online management system tabulates the number of online clock hours for each distance learner. Local programs are notified by the <i>MD i-Pathways</i> Coordinator when learners have reached the hours required for post-testing.</li> </ol>	

***MD i-Pathways* Distance Learners**

Only CASAS C or D or TABE M, D or A Level reading and math pre-tests are used to determine a learner’s eligibility for MD i-Pathways. Entry screening is conducted by each program’s Intake Assessment Specialist. Learners must achieve the required minimum score in math and reading to participate (CASAS C or D pre-test reading score of 238 or higher and math score of 226 or higher; TABE Level M, D or A Level reading pre-test score of 567 or higher and math pre-test score of 557 or higher). When learners reach the online clock hours required for post testing, the *MD i-Pathways*

Coordinator will notify the local adult education program Intake Assessment Specialist who then administers the appropriate post-test.

### **MD National External Diploma Program Learners**

CASAS appraisal tests -Form 130 or 80 or TABE are administered prior to enrolling clients in Diagnostic phase to determine readiness to take CASAS C or D level assessments. To maximize resources, only clients whose Appraisal scores are the C or D level should be enrolled in the NEDP. Entry screening into the Diagnostic is conducted by each program's NEDP Advisor. Appraisals tests can never substitute for NEDP Diagnostic instruments measuring basic skills in math, reading, and writing. Learners must achieve the required minimum score in math, reading and writing to begin Generalized Assessment (CASAS C or D reading score of 236 or higher and math score of 230 or higher, and a holistic score of 3 or higher for the CASAS Written prompt.) Learners who do not meet the threshold should be referred for remediation. Post-tests are not required for NEDP clients in Generalized Assessment Phase to attain an EFL level gain. NEDP learners are not required to be reassessed every year and do not need to be post-tested to show level gain. Learners may advance from ABE Level 5 to 6 by entering Generalized Assessment.

### **RARE Post-testing Time Exception**

Research supports Maryland's recommended 70 to 100 instructional hours prior to post-testing. Shorter pre-test to post-test time periods do not allow for learner gain and can result in over-testing, affecting validity. **Rare exceptions** to the minimum of 40 (CASAS) / / 40 (TABE 11 &12, all levels except ASE); 30 (TABE 11&12 ASE level); 40 (TABE CLAS-E) / 60 (BEST) instructional hours prior to post-testing are allowable on a per learner basis only; however, **complete documentation supporting the reason for any exception** must be maintained at the local level. Programs will be monitored on the use of exceptions, and appropriate actions taken for excessive use or misapplication of exception provisions. Rare exceptions could include a teacher's observation that a learner has made measureable progress in fewer than the minimum instructional hours based upon a number of learner-demonstrated factors. A teacher may also determine it is appropriate to administer a post- test if a learner indicates that he must exit class prior to the minimum instructional hours and has demonstrated measurable progress.

### **Matched Pair**

The combination of a pre-test and a post-test constitutes a matched pair. For a matched pair in a test battery to be valid in reading, math, or listening, the post-test must:

- be in the *same test series* (CASAS GOALS (ABE), Life & Work (ESL), TABE 11&12, TABE CLAS-E, BEST Literacy, BEST Plus 2.0); and
- with exceptions, not be more than one test form *level* greater than the pre-test (does not apply to BEST); and
- Be a *different* form number (CASAS and TABE) or letter (BEST Literacy) from the pre-test.

**Table 4: Examples of a Matched Pair**

<b>PLACEMENT TEST →</b>	<b>PRE-TEST →</b>	<b>POST-TEST OPTIONS</b>
CASAS <i>Life &amp; Work Reading</i> Appraisal, Form 80R	CASAS <i>Life &amp; Work Reading</i> : Level A, Form 81R	CASAS <i>Life &amp; Work Reading</i> : Level A Form 82R, 81RX, or 82RX or Level B Form 83R or 84R
TABE <i>Locator Test</i>	TABE: Level M Form 11	TABE: Level M Form 12
No placement test is administered for <i>BEST Literacy</i>	<i>BEST Literacy</i> : Form B	<i>BEST Literacy</i> : Form C

## **Purchasing Procedures**

Assessment materials are copyrighted and shall not be duplicated. Duplication of copyrighted materials will expose programs to legal and financial penalties. Materials can be purchased directly from CASAS, DRC/CTB, or CAL using the following contact information:

### **CASAS**

5151 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 220  
San Diego, CA 92123-43439  
Phone: 800-255-1036  
Fax: 858-292-2910

[www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org)

### **BEST LITERACY AND BEST Plus 2.0**

Center for Applied Linguistics  
4646 40<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20016-1859  
Phone: 202-362-0700  
Fax: 202-362-3740

[www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org)

### **TABE**

Data Recognition Corporation/ CTB  
P.O. Box 881002  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46208-1002  
Phone: 800-538-9547 Fax: 800-282-0266

<http://tabetest.com/>

## **CASAS ASSESSMENTS**

### **Overview**

CASAS assessments include the new GOALS Series (Reading and Math) for ABE learners and the Life and Work Series (Reading and Listening) for ESL learners. The assessments measure learner skills from beginning to advanced literacy levels and can be used in ABE (Levels 1-6), ESL (Levels 1-6) EL/ Civics, Family Literacy and workplace programs. Most CASAS assessments are appropriate for learners with disabilities through use of appropriate accommodations, if needed. Both paper and e-testing formats are available. Web-based testing may be conducted on computers, Chromebooks, and iPads.

Life and Work includes a balance of life skills and employment related content and is appropriate for English Language Learners. Content correlates to CASAS Competencies, and CASAS Content Standards Life and Work Reading is available in paper and CASAS eTest formats and Listening in CASAS eTests and on audio CDs. This series will eventually be replaced by assessments within the GOALS series but is currently approved through February 2021 to sunset June 30, 2021.

The GOALS series is fully aligned with the national College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and CASAS Competencies. It replaced Life and Work Reading (ABE) and Life Skills Math which expired in February 2019.

The Reading GOALS series (Levels A, B, C and D) measures the rigorous academic vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills contained in the CCRS as well as content based on the CASAS Competencies.

Math GOALS test items include situational scenarios with real-world applications, word problems, simple to advanced calculation, and traditional academic contexts. Formulae are provided within the item presentation so that focus is on math skills and concepts. Students may use a calculator throughout the entire test.

### **Test Administration Procedures**

All staff who administers a CASAS test must have a copy of the test's current test administration manual and follow the test developer's published instructions. This includes explaining the purpose of the test and providing appropriate instructions to learners who are testing.

The Life and Work Appraisal takes approximately 30 minutes to administer. The test is approximately 60 minutes.

For Reading GOALS, administrators must use the 900 R appraisal for paper testing or the 104R Reading GOALS Locator test for e-testing. The appraisal has 28 questions and takes approximately 30 minutes to administer; the Locator about 15 minutes. The Reading GOALS series uses pre- and post-tests at Level A (Forms 901R-902R), Level B, (Forms 903R-904R), Level C (Forms 905R-906R), and Level D (Forms 907R-908R). Level A has 39 questions and is a 60 minute test, and Levels B, C, and D have 50 questions and are 75 minutes in length

For Math GOALS the 900 M appraisal is used for paper testing and takes approximately 30 minutes with 20 questions. The 104M Math GOALS Locator test is used for the e-testing which is a 15 -minute test with 10 questions. The Math GOALS series includes pre- and post-test Forms 913M-914M at Levels A/B and Forms 917M-918M at Levels C/D. Test times are 60 minutes at the A/B Level and 75 minutes for C/D.

Paper test booklets are reusable. For paper testing either a General Purpose answer sheet may be used for manual scoring or a TOPSpro Student Test Record to score with TOPSpro Enterprise. Programs may create their own answer sheets, but these must be thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and learner/staff ease of use.

### **Training Requirements**

Program staff with assessment and instruction responsibilities must register and complete online CASAS *Initial Implementation Training (IIT)*, which may be followed by CASAS face-to-face training by state staff. The training will serve to clarify and practice content from the online CASAS *IIT*.

Update/refresher trainings shall be scheduled by each program but generally are conducted at the beginning, middle, and sometimes at the end of the fiscal year.

### Accurate Range

If an examinee gets very few items right or only a few wrong, the test may not be adequately measuring his or her ability. Learners who score at the low-end range do not receive a scale score. Those who score in the low-end range of a Level B, C, or D should take the next lower test form for a scale score and NRS level. Learners who pre-test *below* the *accurate range*, where no scale score is available for the raw score, should be retested with the next lower level test. If no lower level is available, CASAS advises further instruction before retesting. The student should be assigned the *lowest* scale score that is available for the test that was administered. Without a scale score, a learner’s test scores cannot be entered into LACES. Learners who score at the high conservative estimate/diamond range on a pretest form should retest at the next highest level. Students who score at this range for a post-test should also retest at the next highest level. If it is not possible to administer another post-test because the semester is over or the student is unavailable, the program may use the post-test score even if it falls within the conservative estimate/diamond range. Refer to the appropriate CASAS Test Administration Manual for more specific details on retesting options.

**Table 5: CASAS Placement Testing for ELA Learners**

Listening and/or Reading Administer short oral interview/screening in the <i>Appraisal</i> to obtain preliminary information about learner’s ability to speak and understand basic conversational English.	Raw score < 6	<b>Listening:</b> Administer <i>Life and Work</i> Appraisal 80L.	
		<b>Reading:</b> Administer the 5 <u>practice</u> items from <i>Beginning Literacy</i> (27R or 28R) pre-test.	
		<b>Reading</b> Some difficulty	Administer <i>Beginning Literacy</i> (27R or 28R) pre-test.
		<b>Reading</b> Little or no difficulty	Administer Level A pre-test– <i>Life &amp; Work</i> (81R or 82R)
Alternative: Locally developed screening that has a scoring rubric which determines whether learner should then be administered an appraisal or pre-test.	Raw score > 6	<b>Listening:</b> Administer <i>Life and Work</i> Appraisal 80L.	
		<b>Reading:</b> Administer Appraisal. <i>Life &amp; Work</i> (80R)	
		Scale score achieved on Appraisal determines appropriate <i>Listening</i> or <i>Reading</i> pre-test level to administer.	
Math Alternate/additional option, depending upon learner’s goals & needs.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administer Math Appraisal: <i>Life Skills</i> (80M)*</li> <li>Administer appropriate pre-test based on the scale score results of the Appraisal.</li> </ol>	

**Note:** For ELA listening assessment, programs must use *CASAS Life and Work 980 series*. For ELA reading assessment, programs must use *CASAS Life and Work Reading 80 series*.

\*Replaces Math Appraisal Life Skills (30M)

**Table 6: CASAS Life & Work Assessment Series (ESL only)**

<b>CASAS Life &amp; Work (L&amp;W)</b>				
<i>Measures learner's ability to apply basic and workplace skills in a functional life skills context.</i>				
<b>Appropriate For:</b> ABE and English language learners, including those with limited literacy skills & EL Civics				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level A, Forms 81RX and 82RX Reading are <i>extended range tests</i> that provide alternative assessments at the A level. They should be used primarily for post testing.</li> <li>• Level C, Forms 85R &amp; 86R are workplace-focused.</li> <li>• Level C, Forms 185R &amp; 186R are life skills &amp; workplace focused.</li> <li>• For the ESL Listening test, the learner responds to cues from a compact disc (CD). The ESL Listening test may be administered either individually or on a group basis.</li> <li>• Pre-test &amp; post-test must be a matched pair in each test battery.</li> </ul>				
<b>TEST LEVELS</b> <i>(Easiest to Most Difficult)</i>	<b>READING FORM NUMBER</b>	<b># OF TEST ITEMS/ SCALE SCORE RANGE</b>	<b>Listening Form Number</b>	<b># OF TEST ITEMS/ SCALE SCORE RANGE</b>
<b>Appraisal (Placement)</b>	80R	25 / 171-246	80L	26/ 171-239
<b>Level A</b>	81R	24 / 170-210	981L	38/ 169-207
	82R	24 / 170-210	982L	38/ 169-207
	81RX	28 / 182-227		
	82RX	28 / 182-227		
<b>Level B</b>	83R	32 / 186-234	983L	38/ 190-217
	84R	32 / 186-234	984L	38/ 190-217
<b>Level C</b>	85R	37 / 200-252	985L	38/ 210-239
	86R	37 / 200-252	986L	38/ 210-239
	185R	38 / 197-252		
	186R	38 / 197-252		
<b>Level D</b>	187R	32 / 213-265		
	188R	32 / 213-265		
<p><b>Very Important:</b> It is absolutely critical that the <i>Suggested Next Test</i> tables in the <i>CASAS Test Administration Manual</i> be consulted to determine the appropriate level post-test to administer because a number of CASAS assessment levels “top out” slightly below or slightly above the NRS “cut scores” for each EFL. In general terms, learners who score in the high range (around the top half) on their pre-test should be administered an X test or the next higher level test for their post-test. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If learners pre-/post-test with Level Pre-A Reading Form 27R or 28R, they must achieve a <i>perfect</i> post-test score (30 raw score/202 scale score) to complete the ABE Level 1 EFL. Therefore, learners who score at the high range on the Level Pre-A Reading pre-test Form 27R or 28R should be administered a Level A <i>Reading</i> Form 81R or 82R as their post-test.</li> <li>2. If learners pre-/post-test with Level A Reading Form 81R or 82R they cannot complete the ABE Level 2 EFL because the test scale score tops out at 210 and a 211 is needed. Therefore, learners who score at the ABE Level 2 Education EFL (201-210) in their pre-test should be administered either a Level A <i>Reading</i> Form 81RX/82RX or a Level B <i>Reading</i> as their post-test.</li> </ol>				

**Table 7: CASAS GOALS Series**

<b>CASAS Reading GOALS</b>		
<b>TEST LEVELS (Easiest to Most Difficult)</b>	<b>TEST FORM NUMBER</b>	<b># OF TEST ITEMS/ SCALE SCORE RANGE</b>
<b>Appraisal (Placement)</b>	900R	28/ --
<b>Level A</b>	901R/902R	39/ 165-211
<b>Level B</b>	903R/904R	40/ 196-224
<b>Level C</b>	905R/906R	40/ 210-238
<b>Level D</b>	907R/908R	40/ 228-262

<b>CASAS Math GOALS</b>		
<b>Appraisal (Placement)</b>	900M	20/ --
<b>Level A/B</b>	913/914	40/196-219
<b>Level C/D</b>	917/918	38/221-236

Note: The appraisal on the new Reading GOALS Series no longer gives a scale score. The raw score is used to determine the next level test.

**BEST ASSESSMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION LEARNERS**

There is no placement test for *BEST Literacy* or *BEST Plus 2.0* CAV (computer adaptive version). There is a brief locator test for the *BEST Plus 2.0* print-based version.

**BEST Literacy Overview**

The *Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Literacy* is a print-based assessment that measures reading comprehension and writing skills of adult English language learners in authentic situations. The *BEST Literacy* has three parallel forms – B, C, and D. If Form B is administered as the pre-test, then Form C or D must be administered as the post-test. The *BEST Literacy* may be administered either individually or on a group basis and has a one- hour time limit. It features contemporary information, graphics, and photographs, making the assessment more relevant to today’s English language learners in the U.S.

**Overview**

The *BEST Plus 2.0* is an individually administered face-to-face scripted oral interview that measures the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. Learners are given a series of questions on thematic topics which are social in nature. Each question is scored following a rubric in three domains of language – listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. The *BEST Plus 2.0* is not a reading and writing assessment. Both computer-adaptive and print-based versions are available.

The *BEST Plus 2.0* computer-adaptive version (CAV) does not have a placement test, as the

computer “adapts” the test item selection, generating easier or more difficult test items based upon the learner’s responses. As the scores are entered into the CAV, more difficult or easier questions are generated. As more questions are scored, the CAV hones in on the speaking and listening proficiency level. Test administration time will generally range from 5-20 minutes, depending upon the learner’s proficiency level. The test administrator reads each item on the screen to the learner in a conversational manner, waits for a response, evaluates the response using a *BEST Plus 2.0* scoring rubric, and then enters the score. The CAV is used for both pre- and post-testing since assessment items will be selected based upon the learner’s responses.

If using the *BEST Plus 2.0* semi-adaptive print-based version the learner will be administered a brief locator (placement) test. The computer software selects test items appropriate to the examinee’s ability after the locator items have been administered. There are three *forms* of the semi-adaptive print-based version – D, E, and F, each containing three possible levels (1, 2 and 3). (As of June 30, 2016, forms A, B, and C of *BEST Plus* are no longer approved for NRS reporting.) Scores from the semi-adaptive print-based version must be entered into the *BEST Plus 2.0* Score Management Software which calculates the reportable scale score for LACES/NRS.

### **Test Administration Procedures**

The staff person who administers the *BEST Literacy* or *BEST Plus 2.0* must have a copy of the test’s current test administration manual and follow the test developer’s published instructions. This includes explaining the purpose of the test and providing appropriate instructions to learners who are testing.

- Materials:
  - *BEST Literacy* – publisher’s consumable score sheets and test booklets
  - *BEST Plus 2.0* computer adaptive version – publisher’s CD must be purchased with a set number of test administrations. CD contains both the test administration program and the score management software. The semi-adaptive print-based version of *BEST Plus 2.0* requires an Examinee Test Booklet and a reusable Picture Cue Book for each administration
- Time Limits: Duration of the *BEST Plus 2.0* is dependent upon the learner’s responses. The semi-adaptive usually takes 3 to 20 minutes, depending on the learner’s proficiency. Sixty (60) minutes maximum for *BEST Literacy*.

### **Training Requirements**

***BEST***: After receiving state training from a certified *BEST* trainer, the Intake/Assessment Specialist or ELA leadership staff will provide initial and update/refresher training to their local program staff. All staff with assessment and instruction responsibilities will be trained. Initial and update/refresher training will be scheduled by each program, but generally are conducted at the beginning, middle, and sometimes at the end of the fiscal year. ***BEST Plus***: **Initial and update/refresher training is conducted only at the state level by a certified *BEST Plus 2.0* trainer.**



**Table 8: BEST Approved Assessments**

BEST ASSESSMENT CHOICES	READING	WRITING	SPEAKING	LISTENING
<i>BEST Literacy</i>	•	•		
<i>BEST Plus 2.0</i>			•	•

**Table 9: BEST Literacy Assessment Series**

<b>BEST Literacy</b> <i>Measures the basic functional language, reading, and writing skills of ELA learners.</i> <b>Appropriate For:</b> ELA learners who have limited-English skills and who may or may not have received an education in their native language. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no placement test.</li> <li>• May be administered either individually or on a group basis</li> <li>• Pre-test &amp; post-test must be a matched pair in each test battery.</li> </ul>		
ONE TEST LEVEL ONLY	FORM LETTER	# OF TEST ITEMS/ SCALE SCORE RANGE
Literacy	B, C, & D	68 / 0-78

**Table 10: BEST PLUS 2.0 Assessment Series**

<b>BEST Plus 2.0</b> <i>Measures the oral English language proficiency of English language learners</i> <b>Appropriate For:</b> learners who have limited-English skills and who may or may not have received an education in their native language. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be individually administered.</li> <li>• There is no placement test for the computer-adaptive version.</li> <li>• Print version raw score data must be entered into the <i>BEST Plus 2.0 Score Management Software</i> in order to obtain valid scale score results for LACES/NRS.</li> <li>• Semi-adaptive print-based version pre-test &amp; post-test must be a matched pair in each test battery.</li> </ul>		
TEST LEVEL	FORM LETTER	# OF TEST ITEMS/ SCALE SCORE RANGE
<b>Semi-Adaptive Print-Based</b>		
Locator (placement)		8 / N/A
Level 1	D, E, & F	12 / Adaptive
Level 2	D, E, & F	13 / Adaptive
Level 3	D, E, & F	13 / Adaptive
<b>Computer-Adaptive Version</b>	N/A-Adaptive	N/A-Adaptive

BEST Plus 2.0 Forms A, B and C are no longer approved for NRS reporting as of June 30, 2016

## TABE ASSESSMENTS

**Table 11: TABE Approved Assessments**

<b>TABE ASSESSMENT CHOICES</b>	<b>TABE 11 &amp; 12 (ABE/ASE)</b>	<b>TABE CLAS-E (ESL)</b>
<b>READING</b>	•	•
<b>MATH</b>	•	
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	•	
<b>WRITING</b>		•
<b>SPEAKING</b>		•
<b>LISTENING</b>		•

### **TABE 11&12**

#### **Overview**

The Tests of Adult Basic Education developed by CTB/McGraw Hill Publishing Company, are norm-referenced tests designed to measure ABE students' achievement of basic skills. TABE is available in both paper and computer (online and PC) format. The assessments are also appropriate for students with disabilities and offer braille, large print and audio versions.

**TABE 9&10 expired in February 2019. Local Areas and Adult Education Service Providers may continue to use TABE 9&10 during a sunset period ending on June 30, 2019.** The newest TABE assessment, TABE 11&12, is based on the national College and Career Readiness Standards (CCR) for the three core subject areas: Reading, Mathematics and Language. The test is also aligned with the three HSE exams. TABE 11&12 offers one test length, and does away with the Survey and Complete Battery. The new assessment retains the five test levels (Literacy, Easy Medium, Difficult, and Advanced) but offers one Math section in Applied Math. There are approximately 40 questions per section. The Locator test is lengthened slightly to increase predictive capacity in placing students (Reading 40 minutes; Math 30 minutes; Language 30 minutes) TABE's parallel forms (11&12) offer alternate tests for retesting students. TABE 11&12 transitioned to a new online testing platform powered by DRC INSIGHT.

TABE 11&12 Reading content reflects mature, life and work-related situations highlighting overlapping objectives including word-meaning and critical thinking skills. Language focus on building communication skills necessary for functioning effectively and in daily life. Mathematics content reflects math application for routine tasks.

#### **Test Administration Procedures**

All individuals who administer a TABE test must be trained and have appropriate experience and credentials to handle and administer tests. A state certified trainer will train local staff, with responsibility for assessment.

Test administrators must have a copy of the test's current test administration manual and follow the test developer's published instructions. This includes explaining the purpose of the test and providing appropriate instructions to learners. Assessors administering the paper version of TABE should read directly from scripts provided in the Test Directions booklet.

The allowable time for TABE 11 &12 is also longer reflecting the test’s increased rigor and alignment to CCR standards. Consideration should be made for potential impact on intake and or post-testing procedures.

TABE may be administered individually or in a group setting in paper and pencil form or through the Online Learning System, DRC Insight. All test books are reusable with the exception of Level L, which is consumable.

Paper tests may be locally hand scored using an Answer Key available from DRC and converting raw scores into scale scores using the Scoring Guide. Programs who purchase TABE answer sheets may use the web-based scanning option; however a scanner that is compliant with the DRC Scanning Portal is needed. The computer-based or scanning options provide the greatest ease of use, increased accuracy and the availability of online reporting, which offers programs useful data.

**Table 12: TABE 11 & 12 Levels L, E, M, D, and A Maximum Allowable Testing Times**

Level	Reading Part 1	Reading Part 2	Language	Math Part 1	Math Part 2
L	35 minutes	60 minutes	60minutes	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

**New maximum allowable times (above) were approved by OCTAE in June 2018.**

### **Pre and Post Testing Recommendations for NRS Reporting**

**Alternate Form Testing-** 50-60 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e. 11 M to 12 M) for NRS levels 1-4 with a minimum of 40 hours. For students testing into NRS Levels 5 and 6, 30-59 hours of instruction is recommended. The same recommendation is true if selecting the next level higher for a student who has shown exceptional progress or scored very high on a pre-test (i.e. 11M to 11 D)

Same Form Testing- 60-80 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with the same form. (i.e. 11M to 11M)

Scores are most reliable for diagnostic and instructional purposes when they fall near the middle of the distribution of scores (40-75%) in the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) range. A student may score out-of-range on the TABE test. If the student’s pre-test was in the mid-range of a level, it is best to post-test them with an alternate form of the same level. This means they score one or more NRS levels below the targeted level for that subject test. There are no longer out-of-range scores on the high level for TABE 11& 12. Also, when students score out-of-range they will not receive a scale score or NRS level. The Scoring Guide indicates N/A for scale score and O/R for NRS level. The student will need to be retested on a lower level test in order to earn a score that is in range and can be entered in LACES.

TABE 11&12 scores may also have (+) or (-) visual indicators if a student scores at the high or low end of a NRS level. For example a student scores a 501- on a TABE level D

Reading test. This the lowest score possible within NRS level 3. The 501 scale score is considered to be valid, however, indicates that the student will need to learn the whole range of level 3 instruction in order to show a skills gain. It may be advisable to retest on a level M. A student receiving a score of 535+ is at the highest part of level 3 and will need the next highest TABE test to demonstrate growth.

**Support Materials**

- TABE 11 & 12 Test Administration Manual (also available as a PDF through the INSIGHT Portal)
- TABE 11 & 12 Test Directions (included in each packet of Test Books and is also available as a PDF through the INSIGHT Portal)
- TABE 11 & 12 Scoring Guide (optional for programs that are using scanning only)

Additional resources are available on the [www.tabetest.com](http://www.tabetest.com) in the Resources tab.

**Table 13: Grade Range Scale Score Guidance**

To help programs transition from Grade Equivalent scores to Scale Scores, DRC provided Scale Score guidance below. The Grade Range guidelines were determined by reviewing the NRS Implementation Guidelines, TABE Performance Level Descriptors, College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, Adult Basic Education Levels and TABE Cut Scores. These guidelines should be used only when a student is assessed at the appropriate NRS level.

**READING**

NRS Level	Grade Range Guideline	Grade	Scale Scoring Range
ABE 1	K-1	K	300-371
		1	372-441
ABE 2	2-3	2	442-471
		3	472-500
ABE 3	4-5	4	501-518
		5	519-535
ABE 4	6-8	6	536-549
		7	550-562
		8	563-575
ABE 5	9-10	9	576-596
		10	597-616
ABE 6	11-12	11	617-709
		12	710-800

### MATHEMATICS

NRS Level	Grade Range Guideline	Grade	Scale Scoring Range
ABE 1	K-1	K	300-374
		1	375-448
ABE 2	2-3	2	449-472
		3	473-495
ABE 3	4-5	4	496-516
		5	517-536
ABE 4	6-8	6	537-556
		7	557-576
		8	577-595
ABE 5	9-10	9	596-626
		10	627-656
ABE 6	11-12	11	657-729
		12	730-800

### LANGUAGE

NRS Level	Grade Range Guideline	Grade	Scale Scoring Range
ABE 1	K-1	K	300-379
		1	380-457
ABE 2	2-3	2	458-484
		3	485-510
ABE 3	4-5	4	511-529
		5	530-546
ABE 4	6-8	6	547-559
		7	560-571
		8	572-583
ABE 5	9-10	9	584-607
		10	608-630
ABE 6	11-12	11	631-716
		12	717-800

## TABE Complete Language Assessment-English (TABE CLAS-E)

TABE CLAS-E assesses English proficiency levels to accurately measure reading, writing, listening and speaking skills for adult, non-native speakers. The assessment is based on state and nationally recognized English language development standards and can be used to identify proficiency levels of examinees, place students in appropriate instructional programs and to evaluate progress. THE TABE CLAS-E includes two distinct test forms, A and B, and test materials at four levels. The four levels correspond to NRS ESL level ranges as follows:

TABE Level 1- NRS ESL Level 1-2 TABE Level 2- NRS ESL Level 2-3 TABE Level 3- NRS ESL Level 3-4 TABE Level 4- NRS ESL Level 5-6.

There are four test sections, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. The skill and test areas can be administered in any order necessary for the testing program’s needs, however the testing order below has been shown to work most efficiently based on trial administrations.

**Table 14: TABE CLAS-E Item Count and Test Times**

Core Skill Area	Estimated Testing Time	Number of Items	Mode of Administration
<b>Locator</b>	30 minutes	30	Group
<b>Reading</b>	25 minutes	25	Group
<b>Writing</b> (Selected Response)	20 minutes	20	Group
<b>Expository Writing Folio:</b>	---	5	Group
Write to Describe	4 minutes		
Write to Accomplish Tasks	8 minutes		
Extended Response	15 minutes		
<b>Listening</b>	20 minutes	25	Group
<b>TOTAL</b>	1 hour, 32 minutes		Group
<b>Speaking</b>	25 minutes	16	Individual

### Test Administration

All individuals who administer TABE-CLAS-E must be trained and have appropriate experience and credentials to handle and administer tests. A state certified trainer will train local staff, with responsibility for assessment. TABE CLAS-E provides large print editions to accommodate examinees with special needs.

Test administrators must have a copy of the test’s current test administration manual and follow the test developer’s published instructions. This includes explaining the purpose of the test and providing appropriate instructions to learners who are testing. Assessors should read directly from scripts provided in the *Test Directions* booklet.

A short Locator Interview and Locator test is given to ensure appropriate pre-test selection. The purpose of the Locator Interview is to determine which examinees should be tested with Level 1 and which examinees should go on to take the full Locator test. The Listening/Speaking skills and Reading/Writing Skills of students are treated independently and should be scored as such. Recommendations from the evaluation chart should be followed.

**Table 15: TABE CLAS-E Locator Administration**

Locator Administered	Raw Score	Action
Locator Interview Part A Oral questions	9 or below	Administer Level 1 Listening and Speaking Tests
	10 or above	Administer Locator Test, Part 2 for Listening and Speaking Placement
Locator Interview Part B Written Questions	9 or below	Administer Level 1 Reading and Writing tests
	10 or above	Administer Locator Test, Part 1 for Reading and Writing placement
Locator Test Part 1		Reading and Writing Test Level to Administer
	6 and below	1
	7-9	2
	10-12	3
	13 and above	4
Locator Test Part 2 15 items (An examinee who has been placed at Level 1 for Listening and Speaking does not need to take the Locator Test 2)		Listening and Speaking Test to Administer
	6 and below	1
	7-9	2
	10-12	3
	13 and above	4

### Scoring

TABE CLAS-E provides the number correct and scale scores for each skill area: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking and for the total battery of assessments. Programs must convert the number correct to the scale score for each sub-test and enter a scale score for each sub-test. Hand scoring with stencil, answer key, *Scoreze* sheets or TestMate® software is available.

**Table 16: Scale Scores for TABE-CLAS-E**

ESL Educational Functioning Level	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
ESL Level 1	250-392	200-396	230-389	231-425
ESL Level 2	393-436	397-445	390-437	426-460
ESL Level 3	437-476	446-488	438-468	461-501
ESL Level 4	477-508	489-520	469-514	502-536
ESL Level 5	509-557	521-555	515-549	537-567
ESL Level 6	558-588	556-612	550-607	568-594

**GED® TESTS AND GED Ready®**

Learners who are planning to take the *GED*® test should be administered the *GED Ready*® as a means to gauge instructional needs and predict *GED*® success. Also, programs and Labor-DWDAL will be able to analyze these tests’ data and their relationship to assessments, and other areas of interest. Programs will also benefit from having a readily available data source of *GED*® and *GED Ready*® results.

**Policy:** Programs must enter *GED Ready*® results and *GED*® results, as available, in LACES.

**Exception:** *GED*® results that are received after LACES closes for the fiscal year.

**QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES**

- All programs are required to follow the *Assessment Administration Standards* (see Appendix).
- All adult education programs must complete and implement an annual *Data Quality Plan*.
- Scale score assessment results and other learner data must be entered into the LACES or MWE database in a timely manner following the posted *Annual Data Entry Schedule*. Workforce staff must enter assessment information in the MWE database.
- The LACES help desk, the Labor Office of Workforce Information and Performance (OWIP), and Labor Program Managers will monitor the timeliness and accuracy of program data entry.
- Local programs are required to generate LACES reports at least three times per year and take appropriate action to resolve errors.
- Data quality desk monitoring will be conducted and technical assistance provided where needed.
- On-site data monitoring will be conducted by Labor –DWDAL staff.
- In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Maryland requires Local Areas



and WIOA Title II Adult Education Service Providers to retain assessment records in the learner's file and maintain the file in hard copy or electronic form for at least three years following the date on which the final cost report charged to a program year's allotment is submitted, or until all audit and litigation issues are resolved, whichever is later. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the expiration of the three-year period, the records then must be retained until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action has been taken.

- CASAS, TABE, and BEST assessments must be ordered directly from the publisher.
- Programs will be monitored to ensure that the following misuses of tests do not occur:
  - Teaching to the actual test item.
  - Copying and distributing a test item or test booklet to unauthorized personnel or learners prior to or after test administration as a study guide.
  - Administering a lower level test to artificially increase the learning gain between pre-tests and post-tests.
  - Administering pre-/post-tests in quick succession without sufficient time for instruction to allow for learning gains.
  - Reducing the amount of time allowed 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 score.
  - Deleting accurate tests to manipulate learning gains.
  - Altering test items or score information.
  - Providing the answers to test questions.
  - Translating test items and answers into another language.
  - Excluding certain individuals or groups from pre- and post-testing.
  - Duplicating or copying the test of one learner and replacing the identification number of another number.

# **APPENDICES**

## ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION STANDARDS CHECKLIST

Read each standard and indicate by a check that it is being implemented. Develop an action plan and timeline for any standard that is not being implemented.

### Assessment Administration Standards

Test Security	
<b>A.1.</b>	All test materials, including test booklets, answer sheets, test manuals, and related materials are kept in locked storage available only to those involved in test administration.
<b>A.2.</b>	A system is in place to distribute and collect test materials for testing. Numbering of test booklets should be part of the system under most circumstances.
<b>A.3.</b>	Test administrators are responsible for the security of all test materials in their possession.
<b>A.4.</b>	All test booklets are periodically reviewed for condition. Those that are marked, torn, well-worn, etc., are discarded and replaced.
Test Selection	
<b>B.1.</b>	The appropriate Labor approved and required test – <i>CASAS</i> , <i>TABE</i> , or <i>BEST</i> is selected for administration.
<b>B.2.</b>	Staff responsible for test selection utilize/refer to current test catalogs or access the publisher’s website for this information.
<b>B.3.</b>	In addition to the appropriate Labor required test, other informal or standardized tests are administered on an as-needed basis.
Test Training	
<b>C.1.</b>	All staff who administer a test receive orientation to <i>Maryland’s Assessment Policy</i> .
<b>C.2.</b>	All staff who administer a specific test receive initial and update training on <i>how to administer it</i> .
<b>C.3.</b>	All staff who administer a specific test receive training on <i>how to score it</i> .
<b>C.4.</b>	All staff who administer a specific test have their test training dates entered in LACES or MWE.
<b>C.5.</b>	All instructional staff receive training on interpreting test results to help guide instruction.
<b>C.6.</b>	All instructional staff who receive training on interpreting test results to guide instruction have their training dates entered in LACES or MWE.
Test Preparation	
<b>D.1.</b>	The staff person administering the test has a copy of the test’s current <i>Test Administration Manual</i> and follows the test developer’s published instructions for administering the test.
<b>D.2.</b>	All test materials (booklets, answer sheets, etc.) and supplies (pencils, transparencies, etc.) are assembled.
<b>D.3.</b>	A clock or watch is available for the test administrator/proctor.
<b>D.4.</b>	An overhead projector is provided if a transparency of the answer sheet will be used for demonstration.
<b>D.5.</b>	A quiet, comfortable testing location with adequate space for each learner is provided.
<b>D.6.</b>	The testing location is not in the same room where instruction is taking place.
<b>D.7.</b>	No more than 25 learners per session are allowed when administering a <i>CASAS</i> test.
<b>D.8.</b>	If more than 8 learners are testing, at least one proctor should assist the test administrator.
<b>D.9.</b>	Reasonable test accommodations are provided for individuals with documented disabilities.
Test Administration	
<b>E.1.</b>	The test administrator provides step-by-step verbal instructions to the learners, following the procedures in the test administration manual.
<b>E.2.</b>	Learners are administered a placement (Appraisal/Locator) test to determine the appropriate pre- test to be administered. A placement test may be omitted under certain circumstances (see policies).
<b>E.3.</b>	The placement and pre-test are <i>administered</i> by a staff person <i>other than</i> the classroom instructor, preferably the Intake Assessment Specialist or lead assessors/intake staff. (Under certain limited circumstances, a classroom instructor may administer placement and pre-tests.)
<b>E.4.</b>	The placement & pre-test are <i>scored</i> by a staff person <i>other than</i> the classroom instructor

preferably the Intake Assessment Specialist or lead assessors/intake staff. (Under certain limited circumstances, a classroom instructor may administer placement and pre-tests.)	
<b>E.5.</b> Labor pre-test policy is observed: All learners are administered a pre-test.	
<b>E.6.</b> Labor post-test policy is observed: Post-tests may be administered by the classroom instructor. Post-tests are administered after a learner has completed from 70-100 hours of instruction. Rare exceptions to the minimum of 40 (CASAS) // 40 (TABE 11&12, ABE levels 1-4)/ 30 (TABE 11&12 ABE levels 5-6)/ 40 (TABE CLAS E) / 60 (BEST) instructional hours prior to post-testing are allowed on a per-learner basis only, and complete documentation of the reason for any exception is maintained at the local level to support the exception.	
<b>E.7.</b> The appropriate level of a test is administered, following the test publisher's guidelines.	
<b>E.8.</b> An alternate, equivalent form of the test is used for pre- & post-testing ( <i>matched pair</i> ).	
<b>E.9.</b> The test publisher's answer sheet is used <b>or</b> ....	
<b>E.10.</b> A locally-developed answer sheet is used. It has been checked for accuracy and ease of use	
<b>Test Outcomes</b>	
<b>F.1.</b> The results from a <i>matched pair</i> of Labor required pre-/post-tests are used to determine a learner's entry and update educational functioning levels (EFLs) according to NRS/Labor definitions.	
<b>F.2.</b> If a learner is administered more than one pre-test, the lowest pre-test score determines the learner's entry level and is used as the baseline for determining update level.	
<b>F.3.</b> A completed class or student profile is provided to the instructor or completed by the instructor to help guide instruction.	
<b>F.4.</b> Test results are shared with the learner <i>but</i> actual test items are not reviewed.	
<b>F.5.</b> Test answer sheets & scores are kept in the learner's file, which is maintained for a minimum of three years from the date of submission of the fiscal year's annual financial report.	
<b>F.6.</b> Intake and assessment forms and other documents that may contain information such as learners' social security numbers are shredded or otherwise appropriately destroyed after the three year storage time limit.	

## MARYLAND APPROVED ASSESSMENTS

CASAS eTests<sup>®</sup> for CASAS approved assessments listed are also approved for NRS reporting, however not Computer Adaptive eTests (CAT). While the GED<sup>®</sup> and the GED Ready<sup>®</sup> cannot be used to determine learner level, programs are required to enter these test scores in LACES. Exception: GED<sup>®</sup> score is not known when LACES closes for the fiscal year. By entering GED<sup>®</sup> and GED Ready<sup>®</sup> data, programs and Labor can analyze these tests' relationships to CASAS assessments and other areas of interest. Programs will also benefit from having a readily available data source of GED Ready<sup>®</sup> and GED<sup>®</sup> results.

GED<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the American Council on Education Used under license. ([www.GEDtestingservice.com](http://www.GEDtestingservice.com))

CASAS ASSESSMENTS	ACCEPTABLE POST-TESTS
<b>Easiest–A Level–D Level- Most Difficult</b>	
<b>CASAS Math GOALS Series; ABE only-NRS approved until February 2022</b>	
CASAS Math GOALS Appraisal Form 900 M	N/A
CASAS Math GOALS Series-Form 913- Levels A/B	CASAS Math GOALS Series
CASAS Math GOALS Series- Form 914-Levels A/B	CASAS Math GOALS Series
CASAS Math GOALS Series- Form 917-Levels C/D	CASAS Math GOALS Series
CASAS Math GOALS Series- Form 918-Levels C/D	CASAS Math GOALS Series
<b>CASAS Reading GOALS Series: ABE only- NRS approved until February 2025</b>	
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Appraisal Form 900R	N/A
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 901R Level A	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 902R Level A	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 903R Level B	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 904R Level B	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 905 R Level C	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 906 R Level C	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 907R Level D	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
CASAS Reading GOALS Series- Form 908R Level D	CASAS Reading GOALS Series
<b>CASAS Life &amp; Work Reading: ESL Only-NRS approved until February 2, 2021</b>	
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Appraisal Form 80R	N/A
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 81R Level A	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 82R Level A	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 81RX Level AX	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 82RX Level AX	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 83R Level B	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 84R Level B	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 85R Level C	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 86R Level C	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 185R Level C	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 186R Level C	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading – Form 187R Level D	CASAS Life & Work Reading
CASAS Life & Work Reading - Form 188R Level D	CASAS Life & Work Reading
<b>CASAS Life and Work Listening: ESL Only-NRS approved until February 2, 2021</b>	
CASAS Life and Work Listening - Appraisal Form 80L	N/A
CASAS Life and Work Listening - Form 981L Level A	CASAS Life and Work Listening

CASAS Life and Work Listening –Form 982L Level A	CASAS Life and Work Listening
CASAS Life and Work Listening –Form 983L Level B	CASAS Life and Work Listening
CASAS Life and Work Listening –Form 984L Level B	CASAS Life and Work Listening
CASAS Life and Work Listening –Form 985L Level C	CASAS Life and Work Listening
CASAS Life and Work Listening –Form 986L Level C	CASAS Life and Work Listening

<b>BEST ASSESSMENTS</b>	<b>ACCEPTABLE POST-TESTS</b>
<b>BEST Plus 2.0: NRS approved until February 2019*</b>	
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Computer Adaptive Version	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form D, Level 1	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form D, Level 2	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form D, Level 3	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form E, Level 1	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form E, Level 2	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form E, Level 3	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form F, Level 1	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form F, Level 2	BEST Plus
BEST Plus 2.0- ESL Print Version Form F, Level 3	BEST Plus
<b>BEST Literacy: NRS approved until February 2019</b>	
BEST Literacy - Form B	BEST Literacy
BEST Literacy - Form C	BEST Literacy
BEST Literacy - Form D	BEST Literacy
<b>TABE 11 &amp; 12 ABE Levels 1-6-approved until September 2024</b>	
TABE 11& 12, Level L, Form 11	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level L, Form 12	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level E, Form 11	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level E, Form 12	TABE 11&12
TABE11& 12, Level M, Form 11	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level M, Form 12	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level D, Form 11	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level D, Form 12	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level A, Form 11	TABE 11&12
TABE 11& 12, Level A, Form 12	TABE 11&12
<b>TABECLAS-E: ESL Levels 1-6- NRS approved until February 2021</b>	
TABE CLAS-E Locator Test	
TABE CLAS-E Form A, Level 1	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form A, Level 2	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form A, Level 3	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form A, Level 4	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form B, Level 1	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form B, Level 2	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form B, Level 3	TABE CLAS-E
TABE CLAS-E Form B, Level 4	TABE CLAS-E

**Last Update: August 27, 2019**

## EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVELS, TEST BENCHMARKS, AND FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTORS

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS			
LITERACY LEVEL	BASIC READING AND WRITING	NUMERACY SKILLS	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level 1</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 0–1):            Reading: 300–441            Mathematics: 300–448            Language: 300–457</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 203 and below            Math GOALS: 193 and below</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading and writing skills. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument. At the upper range of this level, individual can recognize, read, and write letters and numbers but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Can write a limited number of basic sight words and familiar words and phrases; may also be able to write simple sentences or phrases, including very simple messages. Can write basic personal information. Narrative writing is disorganized and unclear; inconsistently uses simple punctuation (e.g., periods, commas, question marks); and contains frequent errors in spelling.</p>	<p>Individual has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills or may have only minimal skills, such as the ability to add or subtract single digit numbers.</p>	<p>Individual has little or no ability to read basic signs or maps; can provide limited personal information on simple forms. The individual can handle routine entry level jobs that require little or no basic written communication or computational skills and no knowledge of computers or other technology.</p>
<p><b>ABE Level 2</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 2–3):            Reading: 442–500            Mathematics: 449–495            Language: 458–510</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 204-216            Math GOALS: 194-203</p>	<p>Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety but shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).</p>	<p>Individual can count, add and subtract three digit numbers, perform multiplication through 12; identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.</p>	<p>Individual is able to read simple directions, signs, and maps. Can fill out simple forms requiring basic personal information, write phone messages, and make simple change. There is minimal knowledge of, and experience with, using computers and related technology. The individual can handle basic entry level jobs that require minimal literacy skills; can recognize very short, explicit, pictorial texts (e.g., understands logos related to worker safety before using a piece of machinery); and can read want ads and complete simple job applications.</p>

Last Update: August 27, 2019

## ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS

LITERACY LEVEL	BASIC READING AND WRITING	NUMERACY SKILLS	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>ABE Level 3</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 4–5):            Reading: 501–535            Mathematics: 496–536            Language: 511–546</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 217-227            Math GOALS: 204-214</p>	<p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting detail on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Individual can perform with high accuracy all four basic math operations using whole numbers up to three digits; can identify and use all basic mathematical symbols.</p>	<p>Individual is able to handle basic reading, writing and computational tasks related to life roles such as completing medical forms, order forms, or job applications. Can read simple charts, graph labels, payroll stubs, and simple authentic material if familiar with the topic. The individual can use simple computer programs and perform a sequence of routine tasks when given direction– using technology (e.g., fax machine, computer operation). The individual can qualify for entry level jobs that require following basic written instructions and diagrams with assistance such as oral clarification; can write a short report or message to fellow workers; can read simple dials and scales and take routine measurements.</p>
<p><b>ABE Level 4</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 6–8):            Reading: 536–575            Mathematics: 537–595            Language: 547–583</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 228-238            Math GOALS: 215-225</p>	<p>Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context; can make some minimal inferences about familiar texts and compare and contrast information from such texts, but not consistently. The individual can write simple narrative descriptions and short essays on familiar topics; has consistent use of basic punctuation, but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.</p>	<p>Individual can perform all four basic math operations with whole numbers and fractions; can determine correct math operations for solving narrative math problems and can convert fractions to decimals and decimals to fractions; can perform basic operations on fractions.</p>	<p>Individual is able to handle basic life skills tasks such as graphs, charts and labels, and can follow multi-step diagrams; can read authentic materials on familiar topics, such as simple employee handbooks and payroll stubs; can complete forms such as a job application and reconcile a bank statement. Can handle jobs that involve following simple written instructions and diagrams; can read procedural texts, where the information is supported by diagrams, to remedy a problem, such as locating a problem with a machine or carrying out repairs using a repair manual. The individual can learn or work with most basic computer software, such as using a word processor to produce own texts; can follow simple instructions for using technology.</p>

Last Update: August 27, 2019



## ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVELS

LITERACY LEVEL	BASIC READING AND WRITING	NUMERACY SKILLS	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>ABE Level 5</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 9–10):            Reading: 576–616            Mathematics: 596–656            Language: 584–630</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 239 – 248            Math GOALS: 226-235</p>	<p>Individual can comprehend expository writing and identify spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors; can comprehend a variety of materials such as periodicals and non-technical journals on common topics; can comprehend library reference materials and compose multi-paragraph essays; can listen to oral instructions and write an accurate synthesis of them; can identify the main idea in reading selections and use a variety of context issues to determine meaning. Writing is organized and cohesive with few mechanical errors; can write using a complex sentence structure; can write personal notes and letters that accurately reflect thoughts.</p>	<p>Individual can perform all basic math functions with whole numbers, decimals and fractions; can interpret and solve simple algebraic equations, tables and graphs and can develop own tables and graphs; can use math in business transactions.</p>	<p>Individual is able or can learn to follow simple multi-step directions and read common legal forms and manuals; can integrate information from texts, charts and graphs; can create and use tables and graphs; can complete forms and applications and complete resumes; can perform jobs that require interpreting information from various sources and writing or explaining tasks to other workers; is proficient using computers and can use most common computer applications; can understand the impact of using different technologies; can interpret the appropriate use of new software and technology.</p>
<p><b>ABE Level 6</b>  <b>Test Benchmark:</b>            TABE (11–12) scale scores (grade level 11–12):            Reading: 617–800            Mathematics: 657–800            Language: 631–800</p> <p>CASAS scale scores:            Reading GOALS: 249 and above            Math GOALS: 236 and above</p>	<p>Individual can comprehend, explain and analyze information from a variety of literacy works, including primary source materials and professional journals; can use context cues and higher order processes to interpret meaning of written material. Writing is cohesive with clearly expresses ideas supported by relevant detail; can use varied and complex sentence structures with few mechanical errors.</p>	<p>Individual can make mathematical estimates of time and space and can apply principles of geometry to measure angles, lines, and surfaces; can also apply trigonometric functions.</p>	<p>Individual can read technical information and complex manuals; can comprehend some college level books and apprenticeship manuals; can function in most job situations involving higher order thinking; can read text and explain a procedure about a complex and unfamiliar work procedure, such as operating a complex piece of machinery; can evaluate new work situations and processes, can work productively and collaboratively in groups and serve as facilitator and reporter of group work. Individual is able to use common software and learn new software applications; can define the purpose of new technology and software and select appropriate technology; can adapt use of software or technology to new situations and can instruct others—in written or oral form—on software and technology use.</p>

**Note:** The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical learner functioning at the level should be able to do. They are *not* a full description of skills for the level. \* **Learners who enter at ABE level 6 can complete the level only by passing the GED® or the National External Diploma Program.**

**Last Update: August 27, 2019**

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS**

LITERACY LEVEL	SPEAKING AND LISTENING	BASIC READING AND WRITING	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>ESL Level 1</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b>  CASAS Reading 180 and below  CASAS Listening 180 and below</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 225-394  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 230-407</p> <p>BEST Literacy 0-20  BEST Plus 2.0 88-361  (SPL 0-1)</p>	<p>Individual cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or phrases.</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument.</p>	<p>Individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words such as name and other personal information. May recognize only common signs or symbols (e.g., stop sign, product logos). Can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English. There is no knowledge or use of computers.</p>
<p><b>ESL Level 2</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b>  CASAS Reading 181-190  CASAS Listening 181-189</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 395-441  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 408-449</p> <p>BEST Literacy 21-52  BEST Plus 2.0 362-427 (SPL 2)</p>	<p>Individual can understand basic greetings, simple phrases, and commands. Can understand simple questions related to personal information, spoken slowly and with repetition. Understands a limited number of words related to immediate needs and can respond with simple learned phrases to some common questions related to routine survival situations. Speaks slowly and with difficulty. Demonstrates little or no control over grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read numbers and letters and some common sight words. May be able to sound out simple words. Can read and write some familiar words and phrases, but has a limited understanding of connected prose in English. Can write basic personal information (e.g., name, address, telephone number) and can complete simple forms that elicit this information.</p>	<p>Individual functions with difficulty in social situations and in situations related to immediate needs. Can provide limited personal information on simple forms, and can read very simple common forms of print found in the home and environment, such as product names. Can handle routine entry level jobs that require very simple written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have limited knowledge and experience with computers.</p>

**Last Update: August 27, 2019**

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS**

LITERACY LEVEL	SPEAKING AND LISTENING	BASIC READING AND WRITING	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>ESL Level 3</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b>  CASAS Reading 191-200  CASAS Listening 190-199</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 442-482  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 450-485</p> <p>BEST Literacy 53-63  BEST Plus 2.0 428-452  (SPL 3)</p>	<p>Individual can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Individual can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities and can express immediate needs using simple learned phrases or short sentences. Shows limited control of grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read most sight words, and many other common words. Can read familiar phrases and simple sentences but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Individual can write some simple sentences with limited vocabulary. Meaning may be unclear. Writing shows very little control of basic grammar, capitalization, and punctuation and has many spelling errors.</p>	<p>Individual can function in some situations related to immediate needs and in familiar social situations. Can provide basic personal information on simple forms and recognizes simple common forms of print found in the home, workplace and community. Can handle routine entry level jobs requiring basic written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have limited knowledge or experience using computers.</p>
<p><b>ESL Level 4</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b>  CASAS Reading 201-210  CASAS Listening 200-209</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 483-514  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 486-525</p> <p>BEST Literacy 64-67  BEST Plus 2.0 453-484  (SPL 4)</p>	<p>Individual can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition. Can express basic survival needs and participate in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty. Has some control of basic grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing familiar vocabulary. Individual can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety but shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).</p>	<p>Individual can interpret simple directions, and schedules, signs, and maps. Can fill out simple forms but needs support on some documents that are not simplified. Can handle routine entry level jobs that involve some written or oral English communication, but in which job tasks can be demonstrated. Individual can use simple computer programs and can perform a sequence of routine tasks when given directions (e.g., fax machine, computer).</p>

**Last Update: August 27, 2019**

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS**

LITERACY LEVEL	SPEAKING AND LISTENING	BASIC READING AND WRITING	FUNCTIONAL AND WORKPLACE SKILLS
<p><b>ESL Level 5</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b>  CASAS Reading 211-220  CASAS Listening 210-218</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 515-556  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 526-558</p> <p>BEST Literacy 68-75  BEST Plus 2.0 485-524  (SPL 5)</p>	<p>Individual participates in conversation in familiar social situations. Communicates basic needs with some help and clarification. Understands learned phrases and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary. Attempts to use new language but may be hesitant and rely on descriptions and concrete terms. May have inconsistent control of more complex grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, logical order). Can use word analysis skills and context clues to determine meaning with texts on familiar subjects. Individual can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures. Can self- and peer-edit for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Individual can meet basic survival and social demands, and can follow some simple oral and written instruction. Has some ability to communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects. Can write messages and notes related to basic needs and complete basic medical forms and job applications. Can handle jobs that involve basic oral instructions and written communication in tasks that can be clarified orally. Individual can work with or learn basic computer software, such as word processing; can follow simple instructions for using technology.</p>
<p><b>ESL Level 6</b>  <b>Test Benchmarks (Scale Scores):</b> CASAS  Reading 221-235  CASAS Listening 219-227</p> <p>TABE CLAS-E  Total Reading &amp; Writing: 557-600  Total Listening &amp; Speaking: 559-600</p> <p>BEST Literacy 76-78  BEST Plus 2.0 525-564  (SPL 6)</p> <p>CASAS Reading 236 and above  * BEST Plus 2.0 565 and above</p>	<p>Individual can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work. Can understand and participate in conversation on a variety of everyday subjects, including some unfamiliar vocabulary, but may need repetition or rewording. Can clarify own or others' meaning by rewording. Can understand the main points of simple discussions and informational communication in familiar contexts. Shows some ability to go beyond learned patterns and construct new sentences. Shows control of basic grammar but has difficulty using more complex structures. Has some basic fluency of speech.</p>	<p>Individual can read moderately complex text related to life roles and descriptions and narratives from authentic materials on familiar subjects. Uses context and word analysis skills to understand vocabulary, and uses multiple strategies to understand unfamiliar texts. Can make inferences, predictions, and compare and contrast information in familiar texts. Individual can write multi-paragraph text (e.g., organizes and develops ideas with clear introduction, body, and conclusion), using some complex grammar and a variety of sentence structures. Makes some grammar and spelling errors. Uses a range of vocabulary.</p>	<p>Individual can function independently to meet most survival needs and to use English in routine social and work situations. Can communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects. Understands radio and television on familiar topics. Can interpret routine charts, tables and graphs and can complete forms and handle work demands that require non-technical oral and written instructions and routine interaction with the public. Individual can use common software, learn new basic applications, and select the correct basic technology in familiar situations.</p>

**Note:** The descriptors are *entry-level* descriptors and are illustrative of what a typical learner functioning at the level should be able to do. They are *not* a full description of skills for the level. \* **ESL Level 6: If the scores with asterisks are achieved on the entry assessment, learner should be retested with another test/skill area. Otherwise, the learner will remain at the ESL Advanced level upon exit from the program.**

## Blended and Distance Learning

### Background:

From 2004 through 2006, Maryland piloted two GED® preparation distance learning options, GED® Connections and MD GED®-i (renamed MD i-Pathways). The purpose of the pilots was to explore ways to expand services to a greater number of adult learners, to improve access to GED® preparation instruction for learners with a preference for independent study, and to provide services for students with barriers to traditional classroom program instruction. Following an evaluation of the two pilots, Maryland decided to roll out the MD GED®-i program as the sole distance learning option for students preparing for the GED® tests.

The MD i-Pathways distance learning program is delivered through a centralized system in partnership with a local vendor. All instruction is offered exclusively at a distance and administered by the MD i-Pathways Learning Coordinator. Twelve hours of face-to-face time takes place at the initial intake, orientation and assessment phase so that enrolled students are NRS reportable.<sup>4</sup>

In fiscal year 2017, Maryland established a distance learning work group in order to explore digital learning options that would meet the needs of a changing student population. English language learners and ABE students, with skills below the high school level, now comprise the majority of enrolled learners. There was a need to identify curricula that would provide the kind of rigor and instructional support that would lead to increased student achievement and meet the needs of the learner population. Additionally, the more demanding requirements for instructional content that aligns with College and Career Readiness Standards requires digital literacy and online learning skills; students may also require supplemental work beyond what might be adequately covered in the classroom alone.

Based on input from local providers, the state decided to focus on the implementation of a blended learning program. This approach combines both traditional and online instruction; learning goals are integrated and instruction is monitored and supported in both face-to-face and online modalities. Blended learning provides greater flexibility to students with regard to where, when and how learning occurs. Data indicates that adult learners who engage in blended learning outperform learners who attend traditional classes or programs offered completely at a distance.<sup>5</sup>

### Need for Distance Education

This document defines activities approved for blended and distance learning for Maryland programs and provides guidelines for the reporting of adult learners' contact hours to the National Reporting System with the LACES system.

### General Distance Learning Requirements

**Definition of Distance Education:** Distance learning is 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 via mail, telephone, email, or online technologies and software.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> If a learner does not enroll in MD i-Pathways, six hours of face-to-face contact hours are reported.

<sup>5</sup> Glenda Rose to the LINC S ELL Community of Practices, December 16, 2014

<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/comment/9097#comment-9097>

<sup>6</sup> National Reporting System Implementation Guidelines, November 2011

## Defining Adult Education Learners

- **Traditional Learners:** Students who receive the majority of their instruction through traditional face-to-face instruction.
- **Distance Learners:** Students who receive all or a majority of instruction at a distance.
- **Blended Learners:** Students who are enrolled in at least one class that provides face-to-face instruction and can access online curricula outside of classroom instruction at an offsite location. Instruction is planned and integrated to extend and supplement learning; teachers monitor and support student progress in both modalities.

For NRS reporting, a student is considered a distance learning student if the majority of attendance hours (51% or more) take place outside of the classroom and are counted as proxy hours. Both face-to-face hours and proxy hours will be included in the federal report. Final determination of the student's status is calculated at the end of the fiscal year.

## Identifying and Reporting Contact Hours

Proxy hours may be tracked using one of the following:

- **Clock Time Model** which assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time that a learner is connected, or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.
- **Teacher Verification Model**, which assigns a fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment based on teacher determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed, the assignment.
- **Learner Mastery Model**, which assigns a fixed number of hours for credit based on the learner passing a test on the content of each lesson. Learners work with the curriculum and materials and when they feel they have mastered the material, take a test. A high percentage of correct answers (typically 70%) earns the credit hours attached to the material.

## Requirements for Measuring Contact Hours for Distance Learners:

Students are required to have at least 12 hours of contact with the program before they can be counted for federal reporting. Direct contact hours involve interaction between the learner and program staff through face-to-face or telephone, video, teleconference, or online communication and through which the learner identity is verifiable. Students who cannot attend face-to-face classes and qualify for the MD i-Pathways program should be referred to the MD i-Pathways Program Coordinator following orientation and assessment.

## NRS Reporting for Students in Distance Education:

All LACES data elements are required for reporting distance learning students. Adult education programs must maintain auditable records of proxy contact hours and enter data, at minimum on a monthly basis, to meet both state and federal reporting requirements. For NRS purposes, programs that choose to use proxy contact hours will enter these hours in LACES as "Instruction-Distance Education". In order to meet the requirements for attendance hour verification, programs must maintain documentation of proxy hours earned, curriculum used, and date completed. All programs are required to submit a Proxy Hour Approval Form to their Labor Grant Manager before hours may be entered in LACES.

## Assessment for Distance Learners

The Basic Education Skills and English Language Assessments Policy fully applies to all students. Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as other learners and post tested after the appropriate number of instructional hours. Local providers will conduct intake, orientation, and pre- and post-testing for MD iPathways distance learners and refer appropriate learners to the MD i-Pathways program.

## Approved Curriculum for Distance Learning

Maryland Adult Education and Literacy Services recognizes the following as approved distance learning curricula:

Curriculum	Delivery Model for awarding Proxy Hours	Criteria for Awarding Proxy Hours	Proxy Hour Credit	Validation By
Burlington English	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
Aztec	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
i-Pathways	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
GED Academy (also TABE Academy and CASAS Academy)	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
Edmentum/PLATO	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
Pearson's My Foundations Lab	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System
Khan Academy	Clock	System must track time and log out students after preset period of inactivity.	Recorded time in system	Learning Management System

**NOTE:** Proxy hours may be counted for hours that students are engaged in online activity with the NEDP program, however, NEDP is not an approved curriculum for general use.

Curriculum should be selected according to the type, level, and goals of the learner. If a program wishes to use a distance learning program not currently approved, a request must be submitted to Labor on the Proxy Hour Approval Form. Additional programs may be reviewed and added on an annual basis.

### **Funding for Distance Learning Programs**

Programs may use available funding allocations to support the blended and distance learning program. The state currently supports the MD i-Pathways Distance Learning Program and in fiscal years 18 and 19, programs may also choose to offer this program as a blended learning option at no additional cost. Maryland will continue to explore high-quality online curricula that allow programs to have access to enriched learning experiences.

### **Training Requirements**

Programs that wish to offer a blended or distance learning program must meet state required professional development standards and ensure that instructors participate in vendor-provided training for the online curriculum. Teachers and local leadership team members may need to develop new skills and, as needed, train staff to build and enhance skills in areas of digital communication methods, digital course navigation and learning management system.

In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, Maryland sponsored ten pilot programs for a one-year training in planning and implementing blended and distance learning programs through the IDEAL Consortium. Additional training for instructors will be available in fiscal year 2020.



## GLOSSARY

**Advancement:** Learner advances from one NRS educational functioning level (EFL) to the next, based on the learner's performance.

**Authentic Task:** A task performed by learners that has a high degree of similarity to tasks performed in the real world.

**Basic English Skills Test (BEST/BEST Plus 2.0):** A normed assessment which measures the basic functional language, reading, and writing skills of ELA learners.

**Ceiling:** The upper limit of ability that can be measured by a particular test.

**Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS):** A normed evaluation system designed to assess a number of specific skills.

**Criterion-Referenced Test:** A measurement of achievement of specific criteria or skills in terms of absolute levels of mastery. The focus is on performance of an individual as measured against a standard or criteria rather than against performance of others who take the same test, as with norm-referenced tests.

**Diagnostic Test:** An intensive, in-depth evaluation process with a relatively detailed and narrow coverage of a specific area. The purpose of this test is to determine the specific learning needs of individual learners and to be able to meet those needs through regular or remedial classroom instruction.

**Domain-Referenced Test:** A test in which performance is measured against a well-defined set of tasks or body of knowledge (domain). Domain-referenced tests are a specific set of criterion-referenced tests and have a similar purpose.

**Educational Functioning Level (EFL):** A set of skills and competencies that learners at that level can accomplish in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, and functional and workplace areas. There are six levels for ABE, and six levels for ESL. To determine a learner's appropriate *Entry* and *Update* EFL, programs administer a standardized assessment.

**Educational Functioning Level Gain:** Learner completes or advances one or more EFLs from the lowest assessment score level measured on entry into the adult education program.

**Grade Level Equivalent (GLE):** The grade level that corresponds to a given score. Assessments that report performance in terms of GLEs provide a year and month score for each individual – 6.2 would be equivalent to sixth grade, second month.

**Holistic Scoring:** Scoring based upon an overall impression (as opposed to traditional test scoring which counts up specific errors and subtracts points on the basis of them). In holistic scoring the rater matches his or her overall impression to the point scale to see how the portfolio product or performance should be scored. Raters usually are directed to pay attention to particular aspects of a performance in assigning the overall score.

**Informal Test:** A non-standardized test that is designed to give an approximate index of an individual's level of ability or learning style; often teacher-constructed.

**Level Benchmarks:** Guidelines for placing learners in educational functioning levels, based on their performance on standardized tests.

**Measurable Skill Gain:** Documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress towards such a credential or employment

**Norm:** Performance standard that is established by a reference group and that describes average or typical performance. Usually norms are determined by testing a representative group and then calculating the group's test performance.

**Norm-Referenced Test:** An objective test that is standardized on a group of individuals whose performance is evaluated in relation to the performance of others; contrasted with criterion-referenced test.

**Performance Assessment:** An evaluation in which learners are asked to engage in a complex task, often involving the creation of a product. Learner performance is rated based on the process the learner engages in and/or based on the product of his/her task. Many performance assessments emulate actual workplace activities or real-life skill applications that require higher order processing skills. Performance assessments can be individual or group-oriented.

**Performance Criteria:** A predetermined list of observable standards used to rate performance assessments. Effective performance criteria include considerations for validity and reliability.

**Performance Standards (NRS):** Numeric levels established for outcome measures in the state plan and local program proposal indicating the proportion of learners at each level who are expected to achieve each outcome.

**Placement Test:** The first test administered to a learner to determine the appropriate level pre-test to administer.

**Portfolio:** A collection of representative learner work over a period of time. A portfolio often documents a learner's best work, and may include a variety of other kinds of process information (e.g., drafts of learner work, learner's self-assessment of their work). Portfolios may be used for evaluation of a learner's abilities and improvement.

**Post-test:** A test administered to a learner after some period of instruction, usually to compare scores with a pre-test and to measure learning gains or advancement in the program.

**Pre-test:** A test administered to a learner upon entry to determine initial placement.

**Proxy Hours:** Hours that a student is actively engaged in distance learning activities.

**Published Test:** A test that is publicly available because it has been copyrighted and published commercially.

**Rating Scales:** A written list of performance criteria associated with a particular activity or product which an observer or rater uses to assess the learner's performance on each criterion in

terms of its quality.

**Raw Score:** The number of items that are answered correctly.

**Reliability:** The extent to which a test is dependable, stable, and consistent when administered to the same individuals on different occasions. Technically, this is a statistical term that defines the extent to which errors of measurement are absent from a measurement instrument.

**Reporting Period:** The reporting period that conforms to state and local guidelines. In some programs this will be a semester, or a class cycle. For some open entry/open exit programs that continue throughout the year, the reporting period will be the entire fiscal year.

**Rubric:** A set of guidelines for giving scores. A typical rubric states all the dimensions being assessed, contains a scale, and helps the rater place the given work properly on the scale. These are specific sets of criteria that clearly define for both learner and teacher what a range of acceptable and unacceptable performance looks like.

**Scale Scores:** Scale scores developed through item response theory (IRT) report an individual's proficiency as a score along a fixed metric scale, with each score representing fixed gradations of difficulty in a person's proficiency at competencies or skills. Competencies are placed on the scale with the easiest competencies on one end and the most difficult on the other.

**Student Performance Level (SPL):** There are 10 levels, and each contains a set of skills and competencies that ELA learners at that level can accomplish in the areas of General Language Ability, Listening Comprehension, and Oral Communication. These descriptors for ELA learners were originally developed by the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) project in the mid-1980s. An SPL chart is available in the *BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide*.

**Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE):** A normed evaluation system designed to assess a number of specific skills.

**Test of Adult Basic Education Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS-E):** Accommodates all English proficiency levels to accurately measure students' reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills.

**Validity:** The extent to which a test measures what it was intended to measure. Validity indicates the degree of accuracy of either predictions or inferences based upon a test score. For example, a ten-item single-digit addition test might be administered to a learner who answers nine items correctly. If the test is valid, it can be safely generalized that the learner will likely do as well on similar items not included on the test.