

WEST ABE Assessment Procedures

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Date of last update	04/27/2019
Policy guidance	From Minnesota ABE Policies website (www.mnabe.org/abe-law-policy/mn-abe-policies): <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assessment Policy

Introduction

These procedures detail the local ABE consortium's testing procedures used at all sites. These procedures describe how the consortium is complying with the Minnesota ABE Assessment Policy through outlining:

- The consortium use of **state-approved assessments** (CASAS and TABE) and for which students they are used.
- When and how to conduct **pre-testing** to ensure all students have a valid pre-test within the first 12 contact hours, including how to ensure that the student does not already have a valid pre-test, and how the program handles invalid test results.
- When and how to conduct **post-testing**, including how to ensure that the student is not post-tested before 40 contact hours, how the post-tests are administered, how the program handles invalid test forms and scores, how post-testing data is entered into SiD, and how the consortium works to maintain a 60% or greater post-testing rate for all participants within the program year.
- What the **assessment training requirements** are for initial testing certification, recertification at least every five years, other ongoing training and for which staff.
- What **additional guidance** and procedures the ABE consortium has for local staff regarding testing and assessment.

State-Approved Assessments Used By the Consortium and For Which Students

The Minnesota Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education has authorized three testing systems for Minnesota's ABE programs for the current program year: CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System), TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) and BEST (Basic English Skills Test) Plus 2.0. Two of those tests, CASAS and TABE, are used by sites throughout the consortium to set NRS Educational Functioning Levels for its students.

CASAS

In practice, paper versions of CASAS Life and Work Reading, Beginning Literacy (forms 27 and 28) and Life and Work Reading (forms 81-188) tests are used almost exclusively with ESL learners throughout the consortium, although the assessment is federally approved for use with adult learners at all levels.

WEST is considering this option for all testers considering the rigorous and time-laden new TABE tests. Further research and staff input to be discussed and decided upon in late May.

WEST ABE consortium doesn't use the CASAS Life and Work Listening tests to assess learners.

TABE

The paper version of TABE 9/10 assessments (Levels L, E, M, D, and A) are used for students who indicate English is their first language and are looking to participate in ABE programming. These same assessments may be used for high level ESL students who are transitioning from ESL programming into ABE. Three areas that are administered and approved for setting NRS Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) to include Reading, Total Math (which consists of Math Computation and Applied Math), and Language. In January WEST purchased 500 TABE online testing seats and this will rollover to the new TABE 11/12 test if WEST should decide to continue with both TABE and CASAS.

TABE 11/12

The paper version of TABE 11/12 assessments (Levels E, M, D, and A) are maintained at all Basic Education classroom sites and is the only test used for learners with NRS Primary goals. TABE Forms 11-12 reading tests are used for pre-/post-testing and placing students in ABE, GED and College & Training.

This includes students who are preparing to take the GED, and at times, Advanced ESL students. The three areas that are administered and approved for setting NRS Educational Functioning Levels include Reading, Math and Language.

New students will be tested with TABE 11/12 and the TABE 9/10 is no longer an option after July 1, 2019

Informal Assessments

Throughout the consortium, a number of informal assessments are used to inform instruction, but are not used to place students in NRS Educational Functioning Levels. Examples include:

- Individual teacher-created assessments (such as practice tests for the driver's license exam or U.S. Citizenship exam)
- Diagnostic Reading Assessments (for STAR and Evidence Based Reading Instruction)
- GED® Ready (Official Practice Test of the GED)
- Northstar Digital Literacy (to assess digital literacy skills)

Pre-Test Procedures and Guidelines

All students who enroll in ABE are initially assessed during the first 12 hours of instruction. For students who have a SID account, due to attending another ABE program in MN, the instructor will review their

assessment information before administering an assessment, if needed. If the student has a valid assessment on file, the instructor will talk with the student to make sure the goals are still the same and work to align curriculum (or place in the correctly- leveled class) according to his or her needs. If the student is eligible to be reassessed the instructor will make sure to choose an alternate form of testing in the same subject and family, or follow the steps below for an alternate assessment subject family.

Data from these assessments are used to place learners at appropriate levels of instruction, to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses and to set educational goals.

Appraisals and Locators

CASAS and TABE locator tests are used to determine which assessment form should be given as a pre-test. Best practice dictates TABE and CASAS test administration manuals includes specific recommendations about which level of pre-test to administer, based on the appraisal and/or locator test score, and placement or locator tests are administered whenever feasible. These scores are not used to set EFL's, but to determine which pre-test to administer.

Pre-tests

Pre-tests are administered as soon as possible once a student enrolls in the ABE program, generally during the Intake and Orientation process after an appraisal and/or locator is given, and always within the first 12 hours of instruction. Suggested "next test" charts provided by TABE and CASAS are consulted to guide pre-test selection.

In an effort to obtain complete and valid results, TABE and CASAS tests are administered according to publisher guidelines. Students are encouraged to make sure they have appropriate time scheduled in order to complete the entire assessment. All personal belongings are placed away from the testing space in a designated cabinet and cell phone ringers are turned off.

If possible the instructor, or volunteer, will score the assessment(s) within the same class period or by the end of the testing session. Educational Functioning Levels are automatically determined upon entry in SID. For leveled classes, students are assigned to the appropriate one and given a class schedule. For multi-level classes, the student will either begin instruction or receive a schedule depending on the makeup of the class, the number of students in attendance and student's availability.

In some instances a student will score outside of the valid assessment score range. If this happens, every attempt will be made to have the student take a new, more appropriate form. This can sometimes occur in the same class period or on an alternate day. All WEST teachers are properly trained in the tests they administer to students through either the Southwest ABE Supplemental Service Provider or another state-driven conference such as Summer Institute or Regionals. Testing training is monitored to assure teachers are trained in the most recent versions of the test.

Post-Test Procedures and Guidelines

Students may not be post-tested until they have reached 40 instructional contact hours. For classes that meet multiple days/hours per week, the instructor may space out additional assessments after the first 40-hour period and assessment have been completed. Best practices encourage those instructors to continue consistent assessments in order to ensure student progress is being made and levels gains are achieved.

The Minnesota Department of Education requires that local ABE providers maintain an annual post-test rate of no less than 60 percent. Persistency of students and the ability to get them from pre-testing to the 40 hour mark needed for a post-test is at times a struggle, especially in the jails when the students release date is often unknown. The vast majority of our programs operate in one-room school houses, serving students of all levels and goals. Many of these classes meet just once a week. There is a constant struggle to keep students engaged and consistent as many times they are traveling long distances through inclement weather or dealing with obstacles such as work schedules and child care. Our programs that have leveled classes that meet multiple-times per week at a variety of times or are located in cities with larger populations and public transportation have a higher post-test percentage.

WEST ABE and all instructors are working hard to continually strive and meet the state requirement of 60 percent. Distance Learning is taking root and will most likely continue to grow as viable and relevant platforms are offered and access to technology or internet in remote areas strengthens. More and more teachers are becoming comfortable with the technology themselves, they are creating best practices to help students commit, and curriculum is continually being tweaked and innovated to help students make quicker connections to the life-long value of advancing their educational skills. To support this WEST introduced a computer-incentive program similar to the MN Literacy Council (MLC) which rewards students with a free refurbished computer after 100 hours of distance learning. WEST partners with PC's for People for this venture as they sell a refurbished laptop or desktop for \$100 and WEST buys MS Office for an additional \$20. The student is then familiar with the platform used and can take the computer home for further learning. WEST is not accountable for continuing technology assistance nor an internet connection once the student has earned a computer. This will help our students in more remote regions to get to the 40-hour mark more quickly. After 100 hours of DL at a contact hour rate of \$6.49, the student has generated \$649 in contact hours so the computer is a paid-for incentive.

Post-tests

An alternate test form within the same test series and content area is required for post-testing. As with pre-tests, post-tests are administered under a proctored environment. This can become somewhat confusing, as the NRS level can change over the course of time, depending on which modality is being selected by the SID database to set the Current Educational Functioning Level (EFL). The SID database provides easily accessible reports, including the Assessment History report, which can highlight students and areas or modalities in need of retesting. However, this too can be confusing to instructors as SID does not know which subject area a student is studying and yet will highlight all

assessments available to be given. Although it is a great database it is sometimes difficult to maneuver and pull relevant information to be dissected and sorted.

As with pre-tests, scores that fall outside of the valid range are considered invalid. Teachers make every attempt to have the student re-test in the appropriate form in order to gain a valid post-test score. Relatively new is the requirement for ABE programs is the NRS target percentage requirement for ABE Level 6. The target is 36 percent of students in this level will show a Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) by either obtaining a GED or HS Diploma.

Assessment Training Requirements and Procedures

In keeping with state policy, all ABE staff who administer assessments must participate in assessment training which is offered by ABE supplemental service providers at various events throughout the program year. New teachers are given initial assessment training locally through a “train the trainer” model. They are required to complete formal assessment training in both TABE and CASAS within the first six months of employment, and submit evidence of that training to the ABE Program Manager.

All instructors administering tests must participate in ABE supplemental services-provided training for each test they administer at least once every 5 years. These Implementation Trainings are conducted by state Assessment Trainers. SW ABE contracts with certified trainers in the areas of CASAS and TABE test administration to provide trainings to Adult Basic Education professionals in the proper administration of the assessments, as well as appropriate use of the results in instructional planning. WEST ABE routinely has CASAS/TABE trainings when large groups of staff are in need of training or every five years. Other trainings are usually attended at either Summer Institute or in the fall at the Support Services Conference.

Additional Procedures and Guidance

The “lookback” period for valid tests extends to July 1st of the previous Federal reporting year. Students who have test scores that fall beyond the lookback period have essentially “expired” assessment scores and must be re-tested using an alternate form of the last valid test. Students who return to adult education classes after an extended absence must enter using their most recent assessment results, provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same time frame. If it does, retesting will be required.