



# Adult Learner Assessment

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

Subject: **Adult Learner Assessment**  
Number: D.100  
Effective: July 1, 2024  
Expires: Indefinite  
Status: Replaces D.100 issued July 1, 2023

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

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

## **PURPOSE**

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

## **GUIDANCE: Division-Approved Assessments for Reporting Learner Gains**

Programs must conduct in-person administration of the standardized assessments approved by the division for reporting learner gains whenever possible. For cases in which in-person administration of the assessment is not possible or places undue burden on the learner, programs may administer the assessments listed in the [Remote Administration](#) section using remote proctoring.

## **In-Person Administration**

### **Adult Basic Education Levels 1-6**

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

**Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE):** Reading, Language, and Math; Forms 13 and 14; paper or computer-based non-adaptive

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

**CASAS Math GOALS 2:** Forms 921M, 922M, 923M, 924M, 925M, 926M, 927M, 928M, 929M, and 930M; paper or computer-based

## **English as a Second Language Levels 1-6**

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

**CASAS Life and Work:** paper or computer-based non-adaptive

These assessments are only approved for use through December 31, 2024.

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

**BEST Plus 3.0:** Forms 1 and 2; computer-based delivery format with adaptive (Part A) and fixed form (Part B) sections. The paper version of the BEST Plus 3.0 *is not* approved by the division.

**CASAS Listening STEPS:** Locator test and Forms 621L, 622L, 623L, 624L, 625L, 626L, 627L, 628L, 629L, and 630L; paper and CDs or computer-based

**CASAS Reading STEPS:** Locator test and Forms 621R, 622R, 623R, 624R, 625R, 626R, 627R, 628R, 629R, and 630R; paper or computer-based

## **English as a Second Language Levels 1 through 4**

**BEST Literacy:** Forms B, C, and D, paper

## **English as a Second Language Levels 1 through 3**

**BEST Literacy 2.0:** Forms 1, 2, and 3; paper

## **Remote Administration**

### **Adult Basic Education Levels 1-6**

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

**Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE):** Reading, Language, and Math; Forms 13 and 14; computer-based non-adaptive

**CASAS Reading GOALS:** Forms 901R, 902R, 903R, 904R, 905R, 906R, 907R, and 908R; computer-based

**CASAS Math GOALS 2:** Forms 921M, 922M, 923M, 924M, 925M, 926M, 927M, 928M, and 929M, and 930M; computer-based

## English as a Second Language Levels 1-6

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

**CASAS Life and Work:** computer-based non-adaptive

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

**BEST Plus 3.0:** Forms 1 and 2; computer-based delivery format with adaptive (Part A) and fixed form (Part B) sections.

**CASAS Listening STEPS:** Locator test and Forms 621L, 622L, 623L, 624L, 625L, 626L, 627L, 628L, 629L, and 630L; computer-based

**CASAS Reading STEPS:** Locator test and Forms 621R, 622R, 623R, 624R, 625R, 626R, 627R, 628R, 629R, and 630R; computer-based

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

### **GUIDANCE: Selecting Assessments for Appropriate Learner Populations**

Programs should select the appropriate standardized assessments for each learner based on the characteristics of the learner, including needs, abilities, and goals. Table 1 (refer to Tools section below) provides approved standardized assessments for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) learner populations at each educational functioning level (EFL). The division issues the following guidance to ensure that learners are assessed using the most appropriate approved standardized assessments.

Effective July 1, 2025, BEST Literacy, BEST Plus 2.0, CASAS Life and Work Listening, CASAS Life and Work Reading, and TABE 11/12 will no longer be approved. Therefore, agencies must transition to the new versions of the assessments, BEST Literacy 2.0, BEST Plus 3.0, CASAS Listening STEPS, CASAS Reading STEPS, and TABE 13/14, during PY 2024-25. The division provides the following guidance for using these assessments during this transition year:

1. For new learners and learners continuing from PY 2023-24 who do not have a valid assessment to roll over into PY 2024-25, agencies should use the new version of the assessments. (See #4 below for exceptions.)
2. For learners continuing from PY 2023-24 who have valid assessments that can be rolled over into PY 2024-25 and are likely to continue in the program into PY 2025-26, agencies may:
  - a. Roll over valid assessments from PY 2023-24, posttest with an alternate form of the old version, and then transition to the new version OR
  - b. Administer the new version as the pretest for PY 2024-25.
3. For learners continuing from PY 2023-24 who have valid assessments that can be rolled over into PY 2024-25 and who are likely to exit the program during PY 2024-25, agencies may:

- a. Roll over valid assessments from PY 2023-24 and continue to use the old version of the assessments until the learner exits the program or June 30, 2025, whichever is first, OR
  - b. Roll over valid assessments from PY 2023-24, posttest with an alternate form of the old version, and then transition to the new version, OR
  - c. Administer the new version as the pretest for PY 2024-25.
4. Important:
- a. Due to the delay in availability of BEST Plus 3.0, agencies must use BEST Plus 2.0 with all learners until BEST Plus 3.0 becomes available.
  - b. Agencies should use TABE 11/12 with learners until updated training is available and TABE 13/14 has been added to eData.

### **BEST Literacy/BEST Literacy 2.0**

1. A score from BEST Literacy 2.0 cannot be paired with a score from BEST Literacy.
2. Instructors must not administer the BEST Literacy 2.0 to their own learners.
3. Programs must administer both the reading and writing portions of the BEST Literacy 2.0 and enter the scale scores in eData. The eData system will calculate the composite score and assign the EFL based on the composite score.
4. BEST Literacy 2.0 is NRS-approved for ESL Levels 1-4. However, learners who place into ESL Level 4 cannot demonstrate completion of an EFL with BEST Literacy 2.0. Therefore, BEST Literacy 2.0 **should not be used** with ESL Level 4 learners. When learners place into ESL Level 4 on entry, programs should immediately reassess them with an assessment for higher-level ESL learners (CASAS STEPS or BEST Plus 3.0).
5. Learners that place into ESL Level 3 based on BEST Literacy 2.0 should be transitioned to an assessment for higher-level ESL learners (CASAS STEPS or BEST Plus 3.0). This may be done immediately or after a matching follow-up BEST Literacy 2.0 has been given, at the program's discretion.

### **BEST Plus 2.0/BEST Plus 3.0**

1. A score from BEST Plus 3.0 cannot be paired with a score from BEST Plus 2.0.
2. Instructors must not administer the BEST Plus 2.0 or BEST Plus 3.0 to their own learners.
3. BEST Plus 2.0 paper and computer adaptive and BEST Plus 3.0 computer-based format are NRS-approved for ESL Levels 1-6.

### **TABE**

1. Agencies should use TABE 11/12 with learners until updated training is available and TABE 13/14 has been added to eData.
2. TABE is NRS-approved to place learners in ABE Levels 1-6.
3. TABE is not NRS-approved to place learners in ESL EFLs. Non-native speakers of English who are working on goals where progress related to instruction would be demonstrated appropriately by TABE (e.g., preparing to take the HiSET®/GED® tests or improving academic English skills for advancement to postsecondary education) can be assessed with TABE.
4. Higher-level posttests can be administered if learners show extraordinary progress in class.

## **CASAS GOALS**

1. Effective July 1, 2024, CASAS Math GOALS: Forms 900, 913, 914, 917, and 918 are no longer NRS-approved. Assessments from PY 2023-24 may not be rolled over into PY 2024-25.
2. CASAS Reading GOALS and Math GOALS 2 are NRS-approved for ABE Levels 1-6.

## **CASAS Life and Work Listening and Reading/CASAS STEPS**

1. Scores from CASAS STEPS cannot be paired with scores from CASAS Life and Work.
2. CASAS Listening STEPS and Reading STEPS are NRS-approved for ESL Levels 1-6.

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

**Learners with Special Needs:** Division-approved standardized assessments may not be appropriate for learners with documented special needs. These individuals are not required to be tested with one of the standardized assessments but must be assessed using an alternative assessment (See Policy D.120 Special Needs). These learners will automatically be assigned to ABE Level 1. Because these learners are not given a division-approved assessment, they cannot achieve an EFL gain.

## **GUIDANCE: Assessment Training**

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

## **Training**

### **TABE**

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

### **CASAS**

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

### **BEST Literacy and BEST Literacy 2.0**

New staff members administering this assessment must take the PDS initial training course as soon as possible and must take the course as a refresher every three years.

### **BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Plus 3.0**

As required by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), all BEST Plus 2.0 and 3.0 administrators must attend a training workshop conducted by a certified trainer before they begin administering the test. After initial certification by CAL, Best Plus 2.0 and 3.0 administrators are required by the Division of Adult Education to annually complete the scoring refresher course offered by the PDS. Test administrators must pass the annual scoring refresher course. Administrators who fail to meet these criteria must stop administering the BEST Plus 2.0 and 3.0 until they successfully complete the appropriate courses. Assessments administered by individuals who do not meet these training criteria will be considered invalid.

### **GUIDANCE: Assessment Administration**

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

- a. Criteria for determining the most appropriate standardized assessments for each learner;
- b. Completion of required assessment training by test administration staff, including completion of the division's remote-administration certification process;
- c. First assessment administration procedures, including specific procedures for in-person administration and specific procedures for remote administration; agencies using the *CASAS Intake Screening Process for STEPS* with very low-level English learners (see *First Assessment Administration* below) must include related procedures to ensure appropriate use of the screening process;
- d. Use of appropriate accommodations as allowed by publisher guidelines;
- e. Informal assessment of learners' other needs and goals;
- f. Second assessment administration (posttesting) procedures, including specific procedures for in-person administration and specific procedures for remote administration; and
- g. Contingency planning for appropriate assessment of learners during any extended implementation of stay-at-home orders.

**First Assessment Administration:** It is essential that learners be assessed prior to receiving instruction to ensure that instructors have diagnostic information about the learners' educational needs. All programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all learners, including learners in distance education, are given an initial approved assessment ***before beginning instruction***. This includes the use of the appraisal or locator to determine the correct level of the assessment to be administered. Exception: CASAS has the [CASAS Intake Screening Process for STEPS](#), which programs may use with very low-level English learners to determine if a learner should bypass the appraisal or locator and go directly into a beginning level pretest. Learners who demonstrate great difficulty with the *CASAS Intake Screening Process for STEPS* may participate in instructional activities for up to 12 hours before taking the beginning level pretest.

**Assessment Accommodations:** Accommodations to standardized assessment practices may be appropriate for learners with disabilities or health-related needs. Refer to assessment publisher guidelines for information on alternative test delivery options for students with accommodation needs.

**Informal Assessments:** Programs should use informal formative and summative assessment to inform instructional planning and other services. Informal assessments cannot be used in lieu of required standardized assessments. Results from informal assessments are not entered into eData and will not count toward program performance.

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

**Second Assessment Administration (posttest):** Programs must have procedures in place to ensure that all learners, including learners in distance education, have a minimum of two administrations of at least one assessment with different but equivalent forms of the same instrument. Two different instruments (e.g., a TABE reading and a TABE math or a CASAS Reading GOALS and a CASAS Math GOALS) cannot be paired to determine educational gain. It is permissible to pretest with a paper-based test and posttest with the correct alternate form of the computer-based test and vice versa. Learners that persist in their instruction should be assessed multiple times during a program year, as appropriate.

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

Programs have the option of posttesting outside the recommended timeframes under certain reasonable circumstances. For example, a learner who is being released from prison or anticipates an extended leave of absence may be posttested before the recommended timeframe if the learner has a reasonable chance of achieving an EFL gain.

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

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

**Expired Assessments:** During a program year, if a learner does not receive instruction for 150 days or more, prior assessments are no longer valid, and the learner must be reassessed. For TABE, CASAS, and BEST Plus 2.0 and 3.0, the locator/appraisal must be administered to determine the testing level. Programs must use the alternate level form booklet from the one used during the last assessment administration.

## **GUIDANCE: Additional Instructions for Remote Administration of Assessments**

The following conditions must be in place for an agency to offer remote administration of approved assessments with virtual proctoring:

1. Agencies will designate one or two staff members to do all virtual assessment proctoring. Additional staff members may be designated once an agency has remote assessment in place.
2. Staff who administer assessments remotely must have completed the appropriate assessment training.
3. In addition to having completed the appropriate assessment training, staff must be certified in remote proctoring by a division-designated expert.
4. Programs must have the required technology to conduct virtual assessment proctoring. These requirements are slightly different for each assessment.
5. Assessment staff must meet with students in a separate meeting, prior to the assessment session, to ensure that students understand procedures and have the required technology.
6. Student identity must be verified at the beginning of each assessment session.

### **Special Instructions for Remote Administration of BEST Plus 2.0 and 3.0**

1. Assessment administrators must strictly adhere to the procedures outlined in the corresponding [BEST Plus Remote Test Administration Guidance for Pennsylvania](#).
2. Assessment administrators may NOT administer the test using a cell phone. Students may use a cell phone to take the assessment.

### **Special Instructions for Remote Administration of TABE 11/12 and 13/14**

1. Assessment administrators must strictly adhere to the procedures outlined in [TABE Examiner Instructions for Remote Testing in Pennsylvania](#).
2. Students must complete the *TABE Tool Tutorial* prior to their assessment session to ensure that they understand how to use the various tools available to them.

### **Special Instructions for Remote Administration of CASAS Assessments**

1. Assessment administrators must strictly adhere to the procedures outlined in [CASAS Instructions for Remote Testing in Pennsylvania](#).
2. CASAS requires that anyone administering their tests remotely sign a remote testing agreement on the [CASAS website](#).
3. Special requirements for the CASAS Remote 1:1 Oral Response testing method:
  - a. This option may only be used when the student cannot use the kiosk software on their device or has an unsupported device.
  - b. Teachers may not administer a CASAS Remote 1:1 Oral Response test to their own students.
  - c. Agencies that plan to use this method must add information and procedures specifically addressing Remote 1:1 Oral Response to their assessment policies and procedures.



## **GUIDANCE: Administration of Assessments during Extraordinary Circumstances**

Program assessment policy and procedures must include steps that staff will take to ensure that the program continues to assess learners according to this policy during extraordinary circumstances that impact in-person services. Those steps must include the use of remote administration of approved assessments whenever possible.

Programs may use informal assessments to determine eligibility for participation in division-funded services when learners do not have the technology or digital skills required for remote administration of the standardized assessments used by the program. All learners who are placed into the program using informal assessments must be assessed with a division-approved standardized assessment as soon as possible after beginning instruction.

## **GUIDANCE: Reporting Assessment Results**

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

- Administered according to published guidelines for both in-person and remote administration;
- Scored correctly;
- Recorded completely and accurately by assessor; and
- Entered accurately into eData.

Once eData is open, all programs must enter all standardized assessments in eData within 14 days of test administration.

**Entering Assessments:** Programs must enter all subject area assessments administered to a learner into the eData system.

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

**Determining Educational Gain:** The eData system allows entry of multiple administrations of multiple assessments. However, per Division of Adult Education policy, eData will automatically select the lowest EFL first administration subtest as the learner entry level. Scores entered in eData for follow-up administrations will determine an exit level for learners. The difference between entry level and exit level will determine educational gain, defined as completion of an EFL. Any EFL gain will be used for NRS reporting purposes and for agency performance purposes.

## TOOLS

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

	<b>ABE Levels 1 and 2</b>	<b>ABE Levels 3 and 4</b>	<b>ABE Levels 5 and 6</b>	<b>ESL Levels 1-4</b>	<b>ESL Levels 5 and 6</b>
BEST Literacy	No	No	No	Yes	No
BEST Literacy 2.0	No	No	No	ESL Level 1-3 only	No
BEST Plus 2.0 BEST Plus 3.0 (computer-based only)	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
CASAS Life and Work • Reading • Listening	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
CASAS STEPS • Reading • Listening	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
CASAS • Reading GOALS • Math GOALS 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
TABE 11/12 TABE 13/14	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

**Table 2: Publishers' Recommended Timeframes for Posttesting**

<b>Approved Assessments</b>	<b>Recommended Timeframes</b>
BEST Literacy BEST Literacy 2.0	60 hours minimum; 80-100 hours recommended 40 hours minimum
BEST Plus 2.0 BEST Plus 3.0	40 hours minimum
CASAS Listening STEPS CASAS Reading STEPS CASAS Reading GOALS CASAS Math GOALS 2	40 hours minimum; 70-100 hours recommended
TABE 11/12 and TABE 13/14 Alternate Form NRS ABE Levels 1-4	50-60 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 11M to 12M) for learners with a minimum of 40 hours
TABE 11/12 and TABE 13/14 Alternate Form NRS ABE Levels 5-6	30-59 hours of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (i.e., 11M to 12M)

## **Additional Resources**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **[D.130 Distance Learning Policy](#)**

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

### **[eData Manual and Glossary](#)**

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

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

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