

## NORTH DAKOTA ADULT EDUCATION ASSESSMENT POLICY

*Updated: February 2016; OVAE approved Dec 2014*

### OVERVIEW

The reauthorization from WIA of 1998 to WIOA – Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act – provides opportunity for adult education to continue to reshape efforts for a more solid college and career ready audience. The role of assessment will continue to be paramount to individual academic growth, career development and a springboard for the state and country’s workforce. The accountability of WIOA will continue to gauge the success of assessment in helping move students forward with educational gains. As with WIA, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) will use the established National Reporting System (NRS).

The policies in this document, the North Dakota Adult Education Assessment Policy, are designed to provide guidance to the 17 Adult Learning Centers (ALC) across the state and to ensure full compliance with the following NRS requirements in the same method.

- Use of statewide standardized assessment with parallel forms of pre and post-tests to determine educational gains of students enrolled in the Adult Education programs;
- Use of standard testing protocols to ensure a standardized testing format and to ensure data quality; and,
- Use of data to promote continuous improvement of local programs.

### Need for the Assessment Policy

Quality assessment is an essential component of any exemplary adult education program. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) is committed to nothing less than exemplary programs using assessment tools to fidelity. Towards this goal, NDDPI has authorized statewide use of the following as assessment instruments:

- *Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)*
- *Test of Adult Basic Education - Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS-E)*
- *Basic English Skills Test (BEST PLUS)*
- *Basic English Skills Test (BEST Literacy)*

The above assessments are approved by the US Office of Education and NRS guidelines. To ensure accuracy and consistency, NDDPI requires all ND ALC programs use the selected standardized assessment instruments based upon:

- **Validity** the assessment instrument measures what it is intended to measure. To establish the content validity with respect to the NRS requirements, there must be evidence that the items/tasks of the assessment instrument measures the skills associated with the Educational Functioning Levels (EFL).
- **Reliability** consistency in administration of the assessment instrument; that is, the extent to which an examinee would be expected to perform similarly through multiple administrations of the instrument or under various conditions.

Towards quality assurance of assessment protocol, NDDPI is committed to provide comprehensive and timely professional development and training for all staff when at least annually for the administration, scoring and use of identified assessments. In addition to annual training, NDDPI is committed to continuous improvement monitoring of all sites on a 2-3 year

basis to ensure assessment policies outlined in this document are available and followed with fidelity.

The basis of quality assessment as tools and its subsequent data plays a major role in the following areas:

- Inform students about basic skills levels;
- Help students determine short and long range goals;
- Place students into the most appropriate instructional program;
- Use information as a diagnostic guide to instruction;
- Pre and post-test to record progress;
- Certify level completion;
- Manage program and staff improvement and planning;
- Plan and develop professional development activities; and,
- Assess comparability across local programs.

**Purpose and Uses of Assessment**

ND Adult Education programs are encouraged to use a variety of assessments to assist in the development of their instruction programs and activities to meet the diverse needs of students particularly as we merge academic and college/career readiness; however, for reporting and meeting NRS requirements, only approved test instruments are allowed. ND requires all adult basic and secondary education programs assess all learners with the identified tests. No other forms of assessment will be used for the purpose of pre and post-testing to report NRS educational gains. An appraisal /locator test is used to determine the appropriate pre-test to administer.

Locator Tests	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Adult Basic & Secondary Education (ABSE)
<b><i>TABE 9/10</i></b>		
Reading		X
Math		X
Language		X
<b><i>TABE CLAS-E</i></b>		
Reading	X	
Listening	X	
Writing	X	
Speaking skills	X	
<b><i>BEST Plus</i></b>		
Speaking	X	
Listening	X	
<b><i>BEST LITERACY</i></b>		
Reading	X	

Additional information is available in ....  
 Appendix A: Assessment Charts for placement and progress and post-testing  
 Appendix B: Timeframes for Pre and Post-testing  
 Appendix C: Test Training and Administration

### **General Assessment Guidelines**

- A. All ALC staff administering an assessment must use proper testing, scoring, and reporting protocols.
- B. All ALC staff administering an assessment must be trained in proper administration practices of those instruments.
- C. All ALCs must maintain a record of all staff trained for each assessment, who conducted the training and the date of training. Assessment verification documents will be required during program monitoring.

The state assessment policy is designed to meet the NRS requirements of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; therefore, implementation of this assessment policy is supported by the NDDPI. Implementation and fidelity of the assessment process and policies will be enforced and required by each ALC. To meet the NRS requirements, the State office will undertake the following steps to ascertain the implementation process for each center:

1. Conduct monthly and quarterly audits of the state and OCTAE approved student data management system (LACES) of all sites;
2. In the event of discrepancies, DPI will provide, in writing, steps necessary for correction with required steps for improvement and timeframes;
3. Provide necessary technical assistance/training as indicated; and,
4. Require appropriate documentation of verification that the assessment policy is being implemented during the ALC monitoring process.

### **Pre-test Guidelines**

- All students must be pre-tested with an approved standardized assessment prior to enrollment.
- Students are pre-tested in multiple areas (i.e., reading, math, writing, listening) to provide adequate information about skill levels. This information also helps teachers make decisions about planning curriculum and instructional strategies.
- The student's skill level is determined when the data is entered into LACES which prepopulates skill levels (local programs are encouraged to verify skill level using NRS guidelines).
- Local programs must never manipulate test scores to achieve learning gains that do not accurately reflect the student's educational functional level or student goals.
- Local programs should use a locator/appraisal test for guidance on the appropriate pre-test to be administered. A locator may not be used for placement or post-testing. When administering the TABE, the TABE WORD List may be used for the locator/initial appraisal assessment for students functioning at beginning ABE (1).
- Students must be placed in the corresponding Educational Functioning Level (EFL) as reflected by their lowest test scale score/s.
- If a student has a specific academic goal different from the area in which he/she scores the lowest, the student must be tracked in his/her goal area. Local programs are encouraged to record progress in all areas of instruction.
- Local programs determine if a new pre-test should be administered to a student not in attendance for 90 days who received no instruction.
- TABE 9 and TABE 10 forms must be alternated. The same form may not be used to pre and post-test within 60 days; this will prevent test question memorization and invalidating it as a post-test measure.

- The TABE Locator must be used to determine the level of TABE to be administered: Easy, Medium, Difficult, or Advanced (E, M, D, or A). If the learner is functioning in different levels in different areas, the lowest functioning level will be the basis for the NRS Educational Functioning Level (EFL) placement. To determine educational gain, the learner should be assessed, post-tested, after an instructional period with a different form of the same test. For example: a student's TABE Locator reading score indicates the appropriate level of testing is Level M. The student is then given the TABE Form 9, Level M reading pre-test. After a minimal period of instruction, the student needs to be given the TABE Form 10, Level M as a post-test. Do not post-test with the same form.

### **Post-test level determination**

*Same level:* if the student scored in the middle of the score range on the pre-test, administer the same level post-test, using the alternate form. Example: a learner with a GLE of 5.0 on TABE 9 Reading Level M has plenty of room to show gain on a Level M post-test.

*Next Level:* a student who scores near the top end of the valid range on the pretest may be given the next higher level for the post test. Consider this option when a student has made good progress and may post test beyond the valid range given the same level test. Example: a student taking a Level D pre test scores at GLE 8.7. The student may be given a Level A post-test.

- For those students who continue to receive services from one program year to the next, their post-test may be rolled forward and used as a pre-test. For NRS/LACES reporting purposes the new program year should match with the student entry date of the new program year. For example: a student takes a post-test on May 15, 2016. He/she continues to attend classes until the program ends June 30, 2016. When the program resumes in July, the student is re-enrolled for the next program year, 2016-2017. Since it has been less than 90 days from his/her last test, the post-test scores from May 15 may be used for placement for the new program year, and there is no need to re-test the student. The new test date would be the day he/she starts classes in July for the new program year. The LACES data system allows ALC's to track instructional hours across program years. *[For post-testing the important factor is the number of instructional hours between the pre and post-tests. In a 90 day calendar period, a student attending 3 hours a day / 5 days a week could accumulate 180 hours while a student attending once a week for the same time period would only accumulate 36 hours. Instructional hours for post-testing purposes can extend across two program years. A student entering the program in May 2016 might accumulate 20 hours in the PY 2014-15, but then re-register in July 2016 and get 40 more instructional hours in PY 2014-15 and be eligible for a post-test.]*

### **Additional Guidelines for pre-testing ESL students**

- ESL students must be tracked in either listening/speaking or Reading/Writing. ESL students who are tested in multiple basic skills must be tracked in the lower score area or the student's goal area.
- For the high level ESL student, determine at the time of placement if the student should be enrolled as an Adult Basic Education student or an ESL student. Use assessment results or student's goal as to how the students will be entered in LACES.
- Post-testing ESL students must follow the test publisher's guidelines.

Each North Dakota ALC must have at least one staff (instructor or director) trained in the TABE and either the TABE CLAS-E or BEST PLUS assessment for ESL students. The trained individual(s) must be identified in the annual ALC submission application submitted each spring

to the State Office. In addition, each identified individual must complete training in the TABE (intro, online and/or advanced/refresher) and either the TABE CLAS-E or BEST PLUS assessment (intro, advanced or refresher) at least annually as sponsored and approved by the State Office. Training will be offered by the state or CBT-McGraw Hill certified trainers annually; more often upon request in collaboration with multiple sites and staff needs. Staff training will include: NRS policy, accountability policies, and data collection process; definitions of measures; and conducting assessments.

**Post-Test Guidelines:**

- A **minimum of 70%** of enrolled students must be post-tested.
- The same standardized test (TABE, TABE CLAS-E or BEST PLUS) must be used for placement and for reporting completion level.
- If a student has completed 60 hours of instruction, he/she should be post-tested if there is instructional evidence of level completion. Effective January 2011, National Reporting System (NRS) received a recommendation from CTB McGraw Hill regarding the number of instructional hours required between the pre-test and post-test for the TABE 9/10 and the TABE CLAS-E. The table below incorporates the publisher’s changes.
- To assure valid test results, sufficient instructional time must occur between tests. Follow the test publishers’ recommended time frames for administering post-tests.

TEST	TESTING TIME FRAMES	
TABE	50 - 60 hours, 40 minimum: same level, different form  For students testing into NRS Levels 5 and 6 (ASE Low and High) 30-59 hours of instruction is recommended.	120 hours: same level, same form
TABE CLAS-E	If the pre- and posttest are for the same level but using a different form (e.g., (TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3 to TABE CLAS-E Form B Level 3): CTB recommends 60-95 hours.	If the pre- and posttest are for the same level and use the same form (e.g., TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3 to TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3): CTB recommends 100-140 hours.
BEST Literacy & BEST Plus	60 hours minimum	80-100 hours recommended

\* Recommended timeframes for pre / post-testing - See **Appendix B**

Post-testing prior to the publisher’s recommended timeframe must be done only under the following exceptions:

1. Only students placed in Low ASE EFL.
2. The student plans to leave the program prior to completing the recommended time frame for post-testing.
3. The program plans to close for an extended period of time (i.e. summer breaks).

The local programs must have the following to justify early post-test administration and document this in the LACES assessment folder:

- Evidence that the student was leaving the program early
- Evidence the student gained skills to justify post-testing
- Permission from local program Director for early administration of post-test

**If a student is not post-tested, EFL gains cannot be determined.**

**Student Information Management System (LACES) requirements:**

- All demographic and pre-test data must be entered into LACES at the time of enrollment for every student. The student is to be enrolled after 12 hours of instruction.
- The post-test data must be entered in LACES immediately after testing.
- All student information, including assessment data MUST be entered within 14 days from the time of testing.

**MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

- Scale scores must be used to report student educational gains; LACES automatically calculates the educational functioning level.
- If a student has a secondary credential and he/she exceeds the highest scale score of completion (Level 6), the student should not be enrolled in the ABSE program. For example if a student already has a high school diploma or GED and needs remediation in math to enter post-secondary and exceeds the highest score of level 6, he/she should be referred to another program.
- If a student DOES NOT have a secondary credential and scores exceed the highest score in Level 6, he/she may be enrolled in the ABSE program through two options:
  1. Enroll with a goal to achieve the GED
  2. Student shows a gain in post-test scales scores
- Local centers must follow the test administration guidelines regarding test scoring. Scores are most reliable when they fall near the middle of the distribution scale (40-75% correct). Students whose scores fall near the top may know more than the test can measure. Similarly, those scores near the low end of the scale may give little information about the student's academic skills. Therefore, a retest may be in order. At the higher end, the student should be administered a higher level test (for example: TABE M-D) At the lower end, the student should be administered a lower level test (for example: TABE A-D).

**Record Retention**

Local programs must retain hard copies of instructional records for one year after student exit. For audit purposes, local programs must keep individual student records (paper or electronic) for at least five (5) years, or as required by the sponsoring agency protocol/policy.

**Special Populations & Providing Accommodations**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have provisions related to testing accommodations for students with disabilities and ensures equal access for all students' educational programs, including students with disabilities which provides an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills. Students with documented disabilities may request accommodations for assessment and instruction and have the burden of responsibility in providing appropriate documentation - an evaluation and a formal recommendation for accommodations from a physician, an IEP, or other formal documentation.

- Students with documented disabilities who require accommodations may request assessment instruments in an alternative format and accommodations in test administration procedures.
- The accommodations provided during testing should be the same as during instruction.
- The responsibility of fulfilling accommodation requests rests with each local program who must consider the needs of each student when providing accommodations.
- The State office can provide additional guidance about the appropriateness of accommodation requests and how to access other resources to meet such requests. Vocational Rehabilitation has been a strong partner in assisting local programs.
- Local programs are responsible for providing accommodations at no cost to the student.

If the student does not disclose a disability or the extent of a disability, local programs, in the context of their instructional responsibilities, may ask the student about the existence or extent of a disability. Local programs may NOT ask questions about the presence of a disability simply for reporting purposes.

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### **Appendix A**

- ABSE charts for Placement, Progress and Post-testing
- ESOL charts for Placement, Progress and Post-testing
- Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Descriptions

### **Appendix B**

- Recommended Timeframes for Pre / Post Testing
- Test Developer Contacts

### **Appendix C**

- Test Training and Administration

**APPENDIX A**

**EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVELS – ABE Assessment for Placement, Progress, and Post-testing**

1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Beginning ABE Literacy</b> 0 - 1.9 grade	<b>Beginning Basic Education</b> 2 -3.9 grade	<b>Low Intermediate Basic Education</b> 4 -5.9 grade	<b>High Intermediate Basic Education</b> 6 - 8.9 grade	<b>Low Adult Secondary Education</b> 9 - 10.9 grade	<b>High Adult Secondary Education</b> 11 - 12.9 grade
<b>TEST BENCHMARKS</b>					
<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 367 & below Total Math: 313 & below Language: 389 & below	<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 368-460 Total Math: 314-441 Language: 390-490	<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 461-517 Total Math: 442-505 Language: 491-523	<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 518-566 Total Math: 506-565 Language: 524-559	<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 567-595 Total Math: 566-594 Language: 560-585	<b>TABE (9 &amp; 10)</b> Scale Score: Reading: 596 & above Total Math: 595 & above Language 586 & above

**EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVELS – ESOL Assessments for Placement, Progress and Post-testing**

1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Beginning ESOL Literacy</b>	<b>Low Beginning ESOL</b>	<b>High Beginning ESOL</b>	<b>Low Intermediate ESOL</b>	<b>High Intermediate ESOL</b>	<b>Advanced ESOL</b>
<b>TEST BENCHMARKS</b>					
<b>BEST Plus</b> 400 & below	<b>BEST Plus</b> 401-417	<b>BEST Plus</b> 418-438	<b>BEST Plus</b> 439-472	<b>BEST Plus</b> 473-506	<b>BEST Plus</b> 507-540

**REVISED SCALE SCORES FOR BEST LITERACY**

The table below includes the revised scale score ranges and specific advice from CAL on adult learners at the Advanced ESL level.

<b>NRS Levels</b>	<b>New Scale Score Ranges</b> <i>Effective July 1, 2008</i>
Beginning ESL Literacy	0-20
Low Beginning ESL	21-52
High Beginning ESL	53-63
Low Intermediate ESL	64-67
High Intermediate ESL	68-75
Advance ESL	76-78*

\* If an examinee pretests into SPL 8 with a scale score of 78, or into the NRS Advanced ESL level with a scale score of 76-78, use a different ESL assessment that measures higher reading & writing skills to more accurately measure and examinee’s language ability re-test with another assessment at the time of pre-testing.

***TABE CLAS-E***  
**Forms A and B**  
**Scale Scores for NRS ESL Educational Functioning Levels**

ESL Educational Functioning Level	Reading Scale Scores	Writing Scale Scores	Total Reading and Writing Scale Scores	Listening Scale Scores	Speaking Scale Scores	Total Listening and Speaking Scale Scores	SPL
Beginning ESL Literacy	250-392	200-396	225-394	230-389	231- 425	230- 407	0-1
Low Beginning ESL	393-436	397-445	395-441	390-437	426-460	408-449	2
High Beginning ESL	437-476	446-488	442-482	438-468	461-501	450-485	3
Low Intermediate ESL	477-508	489-520	483-514	469-514	502-536	486-525	4
High Intermediate ESL	509-557	521-555	515-556	515-549	537-567	526-558	5
Advanced ESL	558-588	556-612	557-600	550-607	568-594	559-600	6

**APPENDIX B****PUBLISHER'S RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAMES FOR PRE AND POST-TESTING**

TEST NAME	RECOMMENDED PRE AND POST-TESTING TIMEFRAMES	CONTACT/NOTES
<p><b>BEST Literacy</b></p> <p><b>BEST Plus</b></p>	<p><b>60 hours</b> minimum; 80 -100 hours recommended</p> <p>If the hours for a course of instruction exceed the recommended number of hours, post-testing may most appropriately take place at the end of the instructional session.</p> <p>Because program-related factors such as intensity of instruction, class size, teacher training and experience, and use of appropriate curricula and materials will affect language learning proficiency gains, local programs should consider these factors when determining timing for pre and post-testing.</p>	<p>Mary Schafer ND State BEST Plus Trainer <a href="mailto:schaefm@fargo.k12.nd.us">schaefm@fargo.k12.nd.us</a> 701.446.2806</p>
<p><b>TABE</b></p>	<p><b>50-60 hours</b> of instruction is recommended when testing with an alternate form (ie. 9M to 10M) for students that test into NRS Levels 1-4 (ABE) with a minimum of <b>40</b> hours. For students testing into NRS Levels 5 and 6 (ASE Low and High) <b>30-59</b> hours of instruction is recommended. If the pre and post-test are for same level, same form, <b>120</b> hours of instruction is recommended.</p> <p>CTB/McGraw-Hill suggests that pre and post-test guidelines as Best Practices recommendations based upon feedback. The purpose for assessing with TABE will also have an impact on the implementation of these recommendations. CTB discourages random and frequent testing as it will not present valid gain scores and could create a practice effect, thus producing questionable or spurious scores. Instructional intervention between testing periods is strongly recommended to maximize gain. Proper use of the Locator Test as a determinant of appropriate content level testing is also strongly recommended and is an integral part of the testing process.</p> <p>If a test is to be administered as a retest because the initial test session was invalid, there is not a prescribed length of time that needs to occur. However, CTB strongly encourages some instructional time in order to avoid a practice effect.</p>	<p>Mike Johnson DRC/CTB <a href="mailto:michaeld_johnson@ctb.com">michaeld_johnson@ctb.com</a> 1.630.789.4586</p> <p>Laurel Kaae Williston ALC Williston State College 1410 University Avenue – Box 1326 Williston, ND 58802-1326 <a href="mailto:lkaae@hotmail.com">lkaae@hotmail.com</a> 701.572.5886</p>

<p><b>TABE CLAS-E</b></p>	<p>If the pre- and posttest are for the same level but using a different form (e.g., (TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3 to TABE CLAS-E Form B Level 3): CTB recommends <b>60-95 hours</b>.</p> <p>If the pre- and posttest are for the same level and use the same form (e.g., TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3 to TABE CLAS-E Form A Level 3): CTB recommends <b>100-140 hours</b>.</p> <p>CTB discourages random and frequent testing as it will not present valid gain scores and could create a practice effect, thus producing questionable scores. Instructional intervention between testing periods is strongly recommended to maximize gain. Proper use of the Locator Test as a determinant of appropriate content level testing is also strongly recommended and is an integral part of the testing process.</p> <p>If a test is to be administered as a retest because the initial test session was invalid, there is not a prescribed length of time that needs to occur. However, CTB strongly encourages minimal instructional time to avoid a practice effect.</p>	<p>Mike Johnson DRC/CTB <a href="mailto:michaeld_johnson@ctb.com">michaeld_johnson@ctb.com</a> 1.630.789.4586</p>
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**APPENDIX C**  
**ASSESSMENT TRAINING**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Who is Responsible for Training</b>	<b>Which Staff Should be Trained</b>	<b>When Training is to be Conducted</b>	<b>Procedures for Ongoing Training</b>
<b>BEST Literacy</b>	State Office  Local programs may not provide assessment training to their staff without first consulting with the State office.	Each staff that will be administering the assessment must successfully complete the standard BEST Plus training.	At least annually  New staff will be trained prior to testing. The training will be by appointment any time.	Local Program Director will be responsible for initiating and scheduling training.
<b>BEST Plus</b>	State Office BEST Plus Trainer  Local programs may not provide assessment training to their staff without first consulting with the State office.	Each staff that will be administering the assessment must successfully complete the standard BEST Plus training.	At least annually  New staff will be trained prior to testing. The training will be by appointment any time.	Both BEST Plus and a follow-up BEST Plus refresher/calibration training are available on request at any time. Must be initiated by local program director.
<b>TABE</b> <b>TABE CLAS-E</b>	State Office TABE trainers  Local programs may not provide assessment training to their staff without first consulting with the State office.	Each staff that will be administering the assessment will attend a formal state sponsored training at least every other year.	At least annually  New staff will be trained prior to testing. The training will be by appointment any time.	Local Program Director will be responsible for initiating and scheduling of training for their staff.

Additionally, annual training will be sponsored by the Department of Public Instruction on NRS policy, accountability policies, data collection, review of measures, conducting assessments and other related topics based on need and interest. This training will be offered through the annual Fall Conference or Adult Education meetings scheduled throughout the calendar year. This training will be for Directors, teachers and other local staff involved in data collection, analyzing, compiling and reporting.