Minnesota Department of
Education

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Assessment Policy

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Contents

Policy Overview

Introduction and Context

This document provides the Minnesota Department of Education's guidelines for developing and implementing a comprehensive state and local assessment policy for ABE, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/GED programs, including workforce and family literacy programs. This document identifies key assessment policies that support:

1. Selection and use of appropriate assessment instruments

2. Appropriate test administration, scoring, and reporting of test scores

3. Appropriate use of test results to inform instruction and improve programs

4. Reporting valid and reliable assessment results and related information for accountability to local, state, and federal funding sources and policymakers

Minnesota's Assessment Policy guidelines include the selection and use of appropriate learner assessment and procedures for:

1. Accurate learner placement into appropriate program and instructional level

2. Diagnostic information to inform instruction

3. Pre- and post- testing to monitor progress toward goals

4. Certification of level and program completion.

These policy guidelines also include staff training and test security requirements for all staff that administer assessments and use the results from these assessments.

Need for Assessment Policy

Standardized, ongoing assessment of learner progress is essential to ensure that all learners become proficient in literacy and language skills for adult learners. To ensure accuracy and consistency, the Minnesota Department of Education prescribes that adult education agencies use CASAS, TABE or BEST Plus assessments with proven validity and reliability that correlate to the National Reporting System (NRS). Data from these assessments are used to place learners at appropriate levels of instruction, to diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses, to monitor progress, and to certify learner mastery at specific levels of instruction or readiness to exit adult education.

Validity and Reliability: All TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus assessment instruments have undergone rigorous test development and validation procedures and meet the standards of the American Education Research Association (AERA), the National Council for Measurement in Education (NCME), and the American Psychological Association (APA). The TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus Technical Manuals, contain detailed information about test validity and reliability.

Validity: The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999) states that validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores. There are various evidences of validity, with construct validity encompassing the overriding issue of proper use and construction of test items, and with content-related and criterion-related validity as subcomponents. Item content evidence is a measure of the extent to which test items measure what they are intended to measure. For a detailed discussion of TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus content validity evidence, see the respective technical manuals.

Results from CASAS, TABE and BEST Plus tests are reported using scale scores vertically equated across all forms. These scales have each been correlated to the NRS levels with specific cut scores corresponding to the NRS competency descriptors of performance in employment and adult life skills contexts. During the late 1990s staff from the Center for Applied Linguistics and CASAS worked together to review and update the correlation between BEST Student Performance Levels (SPLs) and CASAS levels to ensure that the NRS Skill Level Descriptors used for reporting learner gains were consistent with research already done in the field. Large-scale CASAS implementing states such as California, Connecticut, and Oregon participated in a national-level NRS advisory committee and provided guidance in the initial development and implementation of the NRS. Once the NRS educational functioning levels were finalized, CASAS conducted a review and confirmed that the CASAS Skill Level Descriptors align with the skill levels of the NRS.

Reliability: The TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus technical manuals provide data on the reliability of their respective item banks and specific test series. The test administration manuals for each test series also contain information about reliability.

For each scale score, all three testing systems provide a conditional standard error of measurement and a range of accuracy for each test form. For every score in the accurate range, a SEM for each scale score is given.

TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus tests are all constructed using the most currently researched and recommended methodology in educational measurement practice — Item Response Theory (IRT) — to establish indexes of item bank, test, and test score reliability. In addition, traditional item statistics, including item point biserial correlations and their p-values, are presented for all the test series.

Purposes and Uses of Assessment

Subsequent sections of this document provide a more detailed discussion of the purposes, descriptions, policies, and test administration procedures for the TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus standardized assessments. In general, these assessments are used to ensure accuracy in learner placement (appraisal tests), in diagnosis of learner strengths and weaknesses, to inform instruction (pre-tests), in monitoring progress (post-tests), and in certifying learner mastery (certification tests). These tests are administered in a standardized fashion, and assessment results provide the basis for state and federal accountability reporting.

Use of Informal Assessments

The Minnesota Department of Education encourages local adult education agencies to use a variety of informal assessments to assist in informing instruction. The use of teacher-made tests, unit tests, portfolios, applied performance assessments, and teacher and learner observations should be encouraged to monitor learning and to inform instruction on a regular, ongoing basis.

Summary and Overview

Appraisal Tests: Appraisal tests identify the appropriate pre-test level. The Minnesota Department of Education strongly encourages the use of appraisals whenever feasible to ensure that appropriate decisions are made regarding:

1. Pre-test form to administer

2. Selection of short- and long-term instructional goals

Learners who are placed in an instructional level that is not at their ability level may be frustrated or bored and leave the program. Learners who take an inappropriate level pre-test may "top out" or score below the accurate range of the test level, and agencies will not have accurate baseline pre-test information to inform instruction and monitor progress. Learners who have low skill levels and identify secondary diploma or GED as a goal will not achieve their goal within a reasonable timeframe and may become discouraged. Establishing short-term goals in addition to long-term goals enables the learner to document success leading to the long-term goal. Federal reporting is based on learning gains and achievement of learner goals within a program year, although some longer-term learner goals are not reported until the learner exits the program.

Appraisals may not be used as a pre-test or to measure learner progress. The TABE and CASAS test administration manuals includes specific recommendations about which level of pre-test to administer, based on the appraisal test score. Agencies should administer appraisal tests prior to learner placement and prior to administering the appropriate pre-test.

Note that the BEST Plus, which is computer adaptive, does not require use of an appraisal.

Progress Testing (Pre-test and Post-Test): The TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus standardized tests are designed to assess learning along a continuum from beginning literacy and English language acquisition through completion of secondary level skills. The CASAS and TABE systems include several test series designed to measure various content domains over a wide range of educational functioning. Each test series includes alternate test forms parallel in content and difficulty.

The Minnesota Department of Education encourages agencies to select the test series based on a learner's goals and the instructional focus of the program (general life and work skills, employability, and workplace). Pre-tests should be administered as soon as feasible after enrollment into the program, preferably during the intake process after an appraisal is given. Suggested "next test" charts provided by TABE and CASAS should be consulted to guide pre- and post-test selection. Post-testing will be at either the same level or a higher level, depending on the pre-test score. An alternate test form within the same test series and content area is required for post-testing. Programs cannot use a reading pre-test and a math post-test to determine learner gains.

Post-testing policies and procedures are covered at greater length in a later section of this document.

Resources for Information and Assistance

Minnesota Department of Education: Individuals requiring information or assistance related to assessment policy or procedures in Minnesota should contact Todd Wagner via phone at 651-582-8466 or via email (todd.wagner@state.mn.us).

BEST Plus: Center for Applied Linguistics, the publisher of the BEST Plus, has information available at their web site (www.cal.org/BESTPlus/).

CASAS: Individuals should contact Linda Taylor, Director of Assessment Development, at CASAS for more specific information about CASAS assessments. Contact Linda Taylor via phone at 1-800-255-1036, ext. 186, or via e-mail (ltaylor@casas.org).

TABE: CTB/McGraw-Hill, the publisher of the TABE, has information available at their web site (www.ctb.com/TABE).

General Assessment Requirements

Learners to be Assessed

All learners reported in the National Reporting System, with the exception of learners given the designation of Work-based Project Learners, must be assessed using WIA-approved standardized assessments.

Assessments Permitted

Minnesota has authorized the TABE, CASAS and BEST Plus standardized assessments for use in establishing NRS educational functioning levels. Additionally, assessment within these test systems:

- Are appropriate for measuring literacy and language development of adult learners

- Have standardized administration and scoring procedures

- Have alternate, equivalent, forms for pre- and post-testing

- Have evidence linking them to the NRS Educational Functioning Levels

BEST Plus

Name/Series	Content	Format	Forms/Levels
Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Plus**	ESL	Paper-based Computer-adaptive	A, B, C

**Approved by OVAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes through April 30, 2015. Beginning May 1, 2015, these tests may not be used for NRS purposes in Minnesota's ABE system.*

CASAS

Name/Series	Content	Format	Forms/Levels
Beginning Literacy	Reading*	Computer-based Paper-based	27 and 28
Life and Work	Reading*	Computer-based Paper-based	• Level A: 81, 82, 81X, 82X • Level B: 83, 84 • Level C: 85, 86, 185, 186 • Level D: 187, 188
	Listening**	Computer-based Paper-based	981L-986L
Life Skills	Math*	Computer-based Paper-based	31-38, 505, 506

*Approved by OVAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes through June 2017.

**Approved by OVAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes through April 30, 2015. Beginning May 1, 2015, these tests may not be used for NRS purposes in Minnesota's ABE system.

TABE

Name/Series	*Content*	*Format*	*Forms/Levels*
9 and 10 Survey* and Complete Battery* versions	• Reading • Complete Math (2 tests: Math Computation and Applied Mathematics) • Language	Computer-based Paper-based	L: Literacy E: Easy M: Medium D: Difficult A: Advanced

*Approved by OVAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes through June 2017.

Specifically, the BEST Plus may be used with ESL level students. The CASAS Life Skills, Life and Work and ECS tests series reading, listening, math and writing tests may be used with either basic literacy or ESL level students. The TABE Reading, Complete Math and Language tests forms 9/10 may be used with basic education and adult secondary level students. Students should be assessed in the modality(s) that most closely match the needs and instructional plans identified in the required personal education planning process. Note that all students, excepting Work-based Project Learners must be pre- and post-tested in at least one modality using a one of the above noted test series.

Recently Expired Tests: The following tests expired on April 30, 2014, for NRS reporting purposes:

CASAS Employability Competency System (ECS)	Reading***	Computer-based Paper-based	11-18; 114, 116
	Math***	Computer-based Paper-based	11-18
	Listening***	Computer-based Paper-based	51-56, 63-66
CASAS Functional Writing Assessment	Writing***	Paper-based	460, 461, 462, 463
CASAS Life Skills	Listening***	Computer-based Paper-based	51-56, 63-66

*** Beginning May 1, 2014, these tests cannot be used for NRS purposes in Minnesota's ABE system.

Uniform Test Administration Times: Learners should be assessed in the areas that are the focus of instruction, using the appropriate TABE, CASAS or BEST Plus standardized test in reading, math, writing, speaking, or listening comprehension. Pre-

tests should be administered within the first 12 hours of ABE program participation. Agencies should administer post-tests, using an alternate form, at the end of a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction to document learning gains. Regardless of the testing schedule adopted, all students who participate in ABE for at least 60 hours should be post tested. Note that:

- Programs offering **high** intensity courses (for example, a class meets more than 15 hours per week) may, at local discretion, choose to test at the end of a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, even though the instructional intervention is more than 60 hours of instruction.

- Programs offering **low** intensity courses with fewer than 60 hours in a semester, quarter, term, or other substantial block of instruction, may, at local discretion, choose to administer a post-test at the end of the instructional period.

Programs may assess individual learners who indicate they are leaving the program before the scheduled post-test time to maximize collection of paired test data. However, testing must not occur before at least 40 hours of instruction.

Programs need not provide additional documentation for students who are post-tested at intervals of greater than 60 hours. Note, however, that the post-testing rate for students testing at intervals of greater than 60 hours must exceed 90 percent.

Factors that affect learning gains include intensity and duration of instruction, motivation of learners, competence of instruction, the link between learner goals and instruction, and other instructional factors.

Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester or other reporting period may serve as a pre-test for the next semester or reporting period, provided that the interim does not exceed three to six months. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for "stop outs" returning to adult education classes may be used, provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same –three to six month window. This policy is designed to reduce or eliminate unnecessary testing.

Program personnel may wish to retest "stop outs" or students returning the following semester or reporting period if they have reason to believe that during the learner's absence or over the summer recess a significant learning intervention occurred that may invalidate the learner's previous assessment results. In such circumstances, retesting is always an option.

NRS Level: NRS levels must be determined according to pre-test scores using the score ranges provided in the attached NRS Functional Level Descriptors tables. If a student has been assessed in more than one modality, e.g. reading and math, the score for the modality that corresponds to the lowest Functioning Level should be used to

establish the students Entering Educational Functioning Level with level progress determined by post-testing in that same modality.

Required Pre-/Post-Match Percentages: The Minnesota Department of Education requires that local ABE providers have an annual pre- and post- match rate of no less than 60 percent.

Testing for Certification: Agencies that use the Citizenship Interview Test to certify achievement of the citizenship goal should follow the guidelines in the CASAS *Citizenship Interview Test Manual*. If retesting is necessary, a significant amount of intervening instructional hours must occur before the retesting.

Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities or Other Special Needs

Accommodations in testing alter the conditions for administering a test or change the nature of an assessment instrument, allowing test takers with disabilities to demonstrate their skills and abilities more accurately. Proper accommodations meet the needs of examinees without changing what a test is intended to measure.

Local Adult Education Agencies: Local agencies are responsible for providing fully accessible services and for ensuring that these services meet reasonable criteria. Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. The need to use an accommodation should be documented in official learner records, such as the Personal Education Plan (PEP). The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner's ability to demonstrate performance on the test. The information can come from a doctor's report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, and other clinical records. Agencies often can contact the local division of vocational rehabilitation or a secondary school to request documentation of a disability.

Accommodations in Test Administration Procedures: Accommodations are reasonable adjustments in procedures to accommodate a documented area of disability. Appropriate accommodations meet the needs of the person with a documented disability <u>without changing what the test is supposed to measure</u>.

BEST Plus: When administering the BEST Plus, Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs should seek guidance from the Center for Applied Linguistics, publisher of the BEST Plus, at their [web site](http://www.cal.org/BESTPlus/) (http://www.cal.org/BESTPlus/).

CASAS: When administering CASAS tests, Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs must follow the accommodations guidelines provided by CASAS, publisher of the CASAS tests, in their publication *Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using CASAS Assessment for Learners with Disabilities* available at their [web site](https://www.casas.org/docs/pagecontents/accommodationsguidelines2010.pdf?status=master) (https://www.casas.org/docs/pagecontents/accommodationsguidelines2010.pdf?status= master).

TABE: When administering TABE tests, Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs must follow the accommodations guidelines provided by CTB/McGraw-Hill, publisher of the TABE, in their publication *Guidelines for Inclusive Test Administration 2005* available at their [web site](http://www.ctb.com/ctb.com/control/researchArticleMainAction?topicId=390&articleId=475&p=ctbResearch) (http://www.ctb.com/ctb.com/control/researchArticleMainAction?topicId=390&articleId=475&p=ctbResearch).

Testing Exceptions: All students must participate in pre- and post-testing. Students for whom standardized testing proves too difficult to yield a valid pre-test score should be placed at the Beginning ESL Literacy level.

Students who are initially placed at the High Adult Secondary Education level and who have a goal of passing the GED or obtaining a high school diploma need not be post-tested.

Guidelines for Each Assessment

Test Administration Manuals

The Minnesota Department of Education requires that local adult education programs follow the test administration guidelines in each test administration manual (TAM) for each test series used. All local adult education agencies must maintain copies of TAMs onsite for all assessments used. Test administration manuals provide quality control guidelines to ensure proper test use, administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. These manuals typically contain information about the following:

- The Assessment System

- Overview of Testing

- Description of Tests

- Determining Pre- and Post-Test Level

- Test Security

- Instructions for Administering Tests

- Scoring

- Data Collection

- Interpretation of Results

- Curriculum Planning, Instruction, and Assessment

- Resources

- Testing Accommodations

- Skill Level Descriptors

- Suggested Next Test Charts

- Answer Keys and Score Conversion Charts (for converting raw scores to scale scores)

- Learner Profile Sheets

- Learner Performance by Competency

- Class Profile by Competency

Training Requirements for Administering Assessments

Training is essential to a quality assessment. For local training purposes, instructors may examine CASAS or TABE tests for review purposes only. It is essential that this occurs in a controlled, supervised environment with test security safeguards in place. Agencies should take special care to ensure the collections of all test booklets at the completion of training.

BEST Plus: The BEST Plus assessment can only be administered by instructors who have completed the Center for Applied Linguistics TABE training.

CASAS: CASAS assessments cannot be used by instructors that have not completed CASAS training by certified personnel.

TABE: TABE assessments cannot be administered by instructors that have not completed TABE training provided by Minnesota's ABE Supplemental Services system.

Training Resources: Minnesota's ABE Supplemental Services System will provide TABE and CASAS assessment training for instructors and other test administrators. Trainings will be provided at bi-annual regional workshops, at Summer Institute and at the request of program administrators. In addition to test administration, trainings will include NRS policy, state accountability policies and data collection procedures.

All CASAS and TABE assessment training will be provided by ABE Supplemental Services System trainers who have been certified by CASAS trainers. BEST Plus training will be provided by CAL certified trainers when there is sufficient demand.

Assessment Training Guidelines: New instructors should not administer assessments until they have participated in assessment training, which is offered by ABE supplemental service providers. All instructors administering tests must participate

in ABE supplemental services-provided training for each test they administer at least once every 5 years.

Programs must maintain a record for each instructor administering tests that includes the date, trainer and location of each training completed by the instructor.

Training for staff involved in gathering, analyzing, compiling and reporting NRS-related data must participate in ongoing data system, NRS policy, state accountability policies and data collection procedures training provided by the Minnesota Literacy Council and are encouraged to attend the annual Support Services Conference.

Post-Testing

Post-testing requirements are presented in the section Uniform Test Administration Times.

Guidelines for Developing and Using Scale Scores

The Raw Score Conversion to Scale Scores and Using Scale Scores to Place Learners into NRS Levels: Each test Administration Manual (TAM) provides charts and guidelines for converting raw scores to scale scores. The Minnesota Department of Education requires adult education agencies to use these as reference points. Scale scores for each test series have been subdivided into ranges that correspond to the NRS levels. NRS guidelines prescribe that learners whose pre-tests place them in different instructional categories (for example, reading and math) be placed in the area with the lower score, if the learner is to receive instruction in the skill related to the lower instructional level.

Test Security Agreements

The Minnesota Department of Education requires that all approved programs sign the program assurances, which include test security. This agreement includes the following stipulations:

- The local adult education program director assumes responsibility for safeguarding all assessment materials, including test administration manuals, and answer sheets (which contain marks or responses).

- All assessment materials should be stored in a locked, preferably fireproof, file cabinet accessible to the program director or the director's designee(s).

- Staff who administer assessments should return all materials immediately after use to the program director or the director's designees.

- All answer sheets and writing samples are treated as confidential until destroyed.

- No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted for any reason.

- Agencies may not use displays, questions, or answers that appear on any test to create materials designed to teach or prepare learners to answer test items.

Quality Control Procedures

Entry of Assessment Data: The Minnesota Department of Education requires that assessment data be entered into the Minnesota Adult Basic Education (MABE) information system at least quarterly and submitted for a desk audit.

Quality Control Procedures: The Minnesota Department of Education has the following quality control procedures in place to ensure that appropriate assessment procedures have been followed: desk audits of local program data are conducted quarterly, controls have been built into MABE to insure that appropriate assessments are entered and scores match EFLs, and data quality is monitored during site visits. Trainings are provided annually data entry staff as well as local directors with bi-monthly user meetings and daily tech support by phone and e-mail available as well.

Purchasing Procedures for Each Assessment: The Minnesota Department of Education requires programs to order assessments authorized for use in Minnesota directly from the publishers.

Methods that are not acceptable for determining NRS Educational Functioning Level

The following procedures/instruments may not be used:

- CASAS appraisal tests

- College Placement Tests, such as the Accuplacer or Compass

- GED Test *(other than to document completion of High Adult Secondary)*

- Official GED Practice Test

- TABE locator tests

- Teacher/program designed tests

- Teacher observation

- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

- Using the same form of the test for pre- and post-testing

- Using different instruments for pre- and post-testing

Distance Education

Definition

Per National Reporting System guidelines, distance education is a 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, e-mail or online technologies and software.

A student must be classified in the ABE Management Information System (MIS) as participating in distance education programming if 50% or more of the student's hours were earned through participation in a distance education curriculum component within the ABE program reporting year. The decision about the student's status as a classroom or distance learner will be made at the end of the year based on the 50% benchmark. On-site hours and proxy contact hours will be recorded as separate classes in the state data system. As is true for all students, distance education students must have at least 12 hours of contact time to be included in NRS reporting.

Assessing Distance Education Students

Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as all adult learners in the state. ABE programs must schedule on-site pre- and post-testing for all distance education students. For distance learners enrolled in a blended/hybrid or an in-class course, assessment will be scheduled as part of the classroom hours for the course. This activity will be scheduled in order to correspond to the appropriate number of hours of instruction for post-testing as noted previously in this assessment policy. All assessment must occur in secure, proctored settings.

Online Learning in the State

Agencies that have completed the training established by the curriculum developer/publisher will be allowed to offer distance learning to their students using the following curricula:

State Supported: These platforms are purchased at the state level and are free to all Minnesota ABE programs. Technical support is available at no cost:

- *i-Pathways* (formerly GED-i) for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED students;
- *SkillsTutor*, a comprehensive reading, writing, mathematics, employability and life skills curriculum; and

Free: There is no license required to use these platforms, and thus no cost. Minnesota does not provide technical support for these platforms:

- *English For All* (EFA), a free Web-based multimedia system for adults learning English as a second language that incorporates California standards for High-Beginning ESL;
- *Mindquest Academy* for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and ABE students;
- *USA Learns*, an English Language instructional program for all levels of ESL students.

Fee Based: Sites using these platforms need to purchase a license directly from the publisher. Minnesota does not provide technical support for these platforms:

- *A+dvancer*, a diagnostic assessment and instructional system aligned to the Accuplacer course placement tests used by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities;
- *Apex Learning, Inc.*, an online program with middle school and high school content for High Intermediate ABE students;
- *Crossroads Café*, a video series for Intermediate and Advances ESL students;
- *Easy ESL*, a video series for Beginning and Intermediate ESL students;
- *GED Academy*, an online ABE, pre-GED and GED-preparation product;
- *KeyTrain*, for students preparing to take the National Career Readiness exam;
- *Learner Web*, a learner-focused web system providing guided support to adults, which is based on Learning Plans built around specific skills (i.e. Citizenship, Learn English for Work, etc.);
- *My Foundations Lab*, preparing students for the Accuplacer, a college readiness test;
- *Novanet*, a program offering math, English literacy, social studies and science lessons, which can be used for adult diploma and GED preparation;
- *Plato Learning Environment*, a comprehensive curriculum that incorporates content from elementary, secondary and post-secondary education; and
- *Rosetta Stone,* an online language and vocabulary building program for Beginning to Advanced ESL students.

A current list of approved distance learning programs and resources can be found on the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning web site](http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/) (http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/).

Contact Hours

Minnesota ABE programs will follow the [ABE Contact Hour Policy](http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance) (found online at http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance) for activities spent on-site for intake, testing, orientation, counseling, and instruction. The manner in which proxy hours are determined will vary depending upon the curricula used. Please refer to the ABE Program Guidelines for Determining Proxy Contact Hours matrix below.

ABE programs must maintain records of proxy contact hours for both state and federal reporting requirements. ABE Program Guidelines for Determining Proxy Contact Hours (PCH) for approved curricula can be found in the PCH guideline matrix below. Proxy hours must be recorded in the ABE data system in classes with titles that include the name of the curricula and the words "proxy hours," for example: "i-Pathways Proxy Hours" or "Skills Tutor Academy Proxy Hours." Note that programs must also maintain records for each student that denote the specific unit/lesson/module completed along with the corresponding proxy hours.

Table 1: ABE Program Guidelines for Determining Proxy* Contact Hours for Approved Curricula

Curricula	Criterion	Criteria for Awarding PCH	PCH Credit
A⁺dvancer	Teacher Verification**	Completed test or lesson	30 minutes per test; 60 minutes per lesson
Apex Learning, Inc.	Student achieves 70+% correct on unit assessment	Copies of completed unit assessment	90 minutes per completed lesson
Crossroads Café	Teacher verifies that student completes work packet	Copy of learner log/proxy hour worksheet	5 hours per completion of module/portion; 130 hours maximum
Easy ESL	Teacher verifies that student completes work packet and time test	Completed work packet and time test	Units 1-6: 4 hours per unit; Units 7-12: 8 hours per unit; total possible: 72 hours
English For All	Teacher Verification**	Completed unit	6 hours per unit; total possible 120 hours
GED Academy	Teacher Verification**	Completed unit/proxy hour reports in Learner Management System	Actual time student spent on lesson, not to exceed 125% of expected time (maximum hours possible = 80)
i-Pathways	Teacher Verification**	Completed lesson	120 minutes per lesson
KeyTrain	Student completes 75% of end-of-level exam questions correctly	Completed level	2 hours per level (level pre-test and lessons)
Learner Web	Number of completed steps, verified through Learner Web report obtained from regional Administrator	Number of completed steps, verified through Learner Web report obtained from regional Administrator	Varies, depending on Learning Plan
MindQuest	Teacher Verification**	Completed module	Varies by module refer to Mindquest Academy Contact Hours Excel workbook
My Foundations Lab	Teacher Verification**	Clock time model per completed activity	Maximum of 45 minutes per reading activity and 1 hour per math activity
Novanet	Student achieves 70+% correct on module post-test	Completed unit lesson and test	1 hour per completed unit/final unit test

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Curricula	Criterion	Criteria for Awarding PCH	PCH Credit
Plato	Student achieves>70% correct on lesson module post-test	Completed Lesson Module	90 minutes per lesson module
Rosetta Stone	Successful completion of core lesson; each lesson has a different proficiency level needed for successful completion	Individual learner report	3 hours per core lesson; maximum total of 48 proxy hours per level
Skills Tutor	Student achieves>70% on quizzes and post-test; teacher verification** needed for pre-tests	Completed Lesson	30 minutes per lesson
USA Learns	Student passes unit final quiz	Competed Unit	3 hours per unit for courses 1 and 2; 2 hours per unit for course 3

*__Proxy__: MN ABE programs will assign contact hours based on the criterion noted above. Typically, this is based on estimated time for content mastery. For a couple products like GED Academy and My Foundations Lab, this is based on actual on-line time spent completing units/activities.

**__Teacher Verification__: Teacher verifies that student has completed all of the required activities for a lesson, module or unit and student has achieved mastery or a level of mastery sufficient for a learner to move to the next unit of study.

Outcome Measures Definitions

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills
EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS			

Beginning ABE Literacy
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10) scale scores
 	
    Reading 367 and below
 	
    Total Math 313 and below
 	
    Language 392 and below
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading 200 and below
 	
    Math 200 and below
	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.	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.	Individual has little or no ability to read basic signs or maps and 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.

Beginning Basic Education
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10) scale scores
 	
    Reading: 368–460
 	
    Total Math: 314–441
 	
    Language: 393–490
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading: 201–210
 	
    Math: 201–210
	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 individual shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).	Individual can count, add, and subtract three digit numbers, can perform multiplication through 12, can identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.	Individual is able to read simple directions, signs, and maps, fill out simple forms requiring basic personal information, write phone messages, and make simple changes. 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.

Outcome Measures Definitions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills

Low Intermediate Basic Education
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10) scale scores:
 	
    Reading: 461–517
 	
    Total Math: 442–505
 	
    Language: 491–523
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading: 211–220
 	
    Math: 211–220
	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 a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.	Individual can perform with high accuracy all four basic math operations using whole numbers up to three digits and can identify and use all basic mathematical symbols.	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; and can read simple charts, graphs, labels, and 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 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; and can read simple dials and scales and take routine measurements.

High Intermediate Basic Education
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10) scale scores:
 	
    Reading: 518–566
 	
    Total Math: 506–565
 	
    Language: 524–559
 	
CASAS: scale scores
 	
    Reading: 221–235
 	
    Math: 221–235
	Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context and 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 and has consistent use of basic punctuation but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.	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; and can perform basic operations on fractions	Individual is able to handle basic life skills tasks such as graphs, charts, and labels and can follow multistep 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, and can follow simple instructions for using technology.

Outcome Measures Definitions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS			
Literacy Level	**Basic Reading and Writing**	**Numeracy Skills**	**Functional and Workplace Skills**

Low Adult Secondary Education
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10): scale scores:
 	
    Reading: 567–595
 	
    Total Math: 566–594
 	
    Language: 560–585
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading: 236–245
 	
    Math: 236–245
	Individual can comprehend expository writing and identify spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; can comprehend a variety of materials such as periodicals and nontechnical journals on common topics; can comprehend library reference materials and compose multiparagraph essays; can listen to oral instructions and write an accurate synthesis of them; and 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; and can write personal notes and letters that accurately reflect thoughts.	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; and can use math in business transactions.	Individual is able or can learn to follow simple multistep 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; and can interpret the appropriate use of new software and technology.

High Adult Secondary Education
 	
 Test benchmark:
 	
TABE (9–10): scale scores:
 	
    Reading: 596 and above
 	
    Total Math: 595 and above
 	
    Language: 586 and above
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading: 246 and above
 	
    Math: 246 and above
	Individual can comprehend, explain, and analyze information from a variety of literacy works, including primary source materials and professional journals, and can use context cues and higher order processes to interpret meaning of written material. Writing is cohesive with clearly expressed ideas supported by relevant detail, and individual can use varied and complex sentence structures with few mechanical errors.	Individual can make mathematical estimates of time and space and can apply principles of geometry to measure angles, lines, and surfaces and can also apply trigonometric functions.	Individual is able to 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; and can work productively and collaboratively in groups and serve as facilitator and reporter of group work. The 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.

Outcome Measures Definitions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS	

Assessment Policy – Minnesota Adult Basic Education

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills

Beginning ESL Literacy
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading 180 and below
 	
    Listening 162-180
 	
BEST Plus: 400 and below (SPL 0–1)
	Individual cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or very simple learned phrases.	Individual has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language. May be able to recognize and copy letters, numbers and a few words (e.g. own name). May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language. Individual may have difficulty using a writing instrument.	Individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words. May recognize only common words, signs or symbols (e.g., name, stop sign, product logos). Can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English. May have no knowledge or use of computers.

Low Beginning ESL
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
    Reading: 181–190
 	
    Listening: 181–189
 	
BEST Plus: 401–417 (SPL 2)
	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.	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.	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.

Outcome Measures Definitions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills

High Beginning ESL
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
      Reading: 191–200
 	
      Listening: 190–199
 	
BEST Plus: 418-438 (SPL 3)
	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.	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.
			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.

Low Intermediate ESL
 	
Test benchmark:
 	
CASAS scale scores
 	
      Reading: 201–210
 	
      Listening: 200–209
 	
BEST Plus: 439–472 (SPL 4)
	Individual expresses basic survival needs and participates in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty. Understands simple learned phrases easily and some new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with repetition. Asks and responds to questions in familiar contexts. Has some control of basic grammar.	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 may lack variety in sentence structure, clarity and focus of writing. Shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and spelling. Uses some punctuation consistently (e.g., periods, commas, question marks, capitalization, etc.)	Individual can interpret simple directions, schedules, signs, and maps, etc. Completes 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 clarified orally or through demonstration. Individual may be able to use simple computer programs and can perform a sequence of routine tasks given directions (e.g., fax machine, computer).

Outcome Measures Definitions

EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ADULT BASIC EDUCATION LEVELS

Literacy Level	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional and Workplace Skills
High Intermediate ESL Test benchmark: CASAS scale scores Reading: 211–220 Listening: 211–218 BEST Plus: 473–506 (SPL 5)	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.	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.	Individual can meet basic survival and social demands, and can follow some simple oral and written instructions. 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, and can follow simple instructions for using technology.
Advanced ESL Test benchmark: CASAS scale scores Reading: 221–235 Listening: 219–227 BEST Plus: 507–540 (SPL 6)	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.	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.	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.

For More Information

This policy, along with resources for Minnesota ABE assessments and accountability, can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE LINCS Accountability and NRS Page](http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/accountability-nrs) (http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/accountability-nrs).

Minnesota ABE Distance Learning resources can be found online at [The Minnesota Literacy Council Distance Learning](http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/) (http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/).

Other ABE policies and resources can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE LINCS Law, Policy and Guidance Page](http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance) (http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance).

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