

# 2020-2021 Assessment Policy

## Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE)

***Effective July 1, 2020***

**Original Policy Development Date: April 1, 2006**

**Original Policy Implementation Date: July 1, 2006**

**Latest Policy Revision Date: December 27, 2019**

*Contents*

[Policy Overview 4](#_Toc28345549)

[Introduction and Context 4](#_Toc28345550)

[Need for Assessment Policy 4](#_Toc28345551)

[Purposes and Uses of Assessment 6](#_Toc28345552)

[Use of Informal Assessments 6](#_Toc28345553)

[Summary and Overview 6](#_Toc28345554)

[Resources for Information and Assistance 7](#_Toc28345555)

[General Assessment Requirements 8](#_Toc28345556)

[Learners to be Assessed 8](#_Toc28345557)

[Assessments Permitted 8](#_Toc28345558)

[BEST Plus 8](#_Toc28345559)

[CASAS 8](#_Toc28345560)

[TABE 9](#_Toc28345561)

[Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities or Other Special Needs 10](#_Toc28345562)

[Guidelines for Each Assessment 11](#_Toc28345563)

[Test Administration Manuals 11](#_Toc28345564)

[Training Requirements for Administering Assessments 12](#_Toc28345565)

[Post-Testing 13](#_Toc28345566)

[Guidelines for Developing and Using Scale Scores 13](#_Toc28345567)

[Test Security Agreements 13](#_Toc28345568)

[Quality Control Procedures 14](#_Toc28345569)

[Methods that are not acceptable for determining NRS Educational Functioning Level 14](#_Toc28345570)

[Distance Education 15](#_Toc28345571)

[Background 15](#_Toc28345572)

[Overview of Distance Learning Delivery Requirements in Minnesota ABE 16](#_Toc28345573)

[General Distance Learning Requirements 16](#_Toc28345574)

[Professional Development 16](#_Toc28345575)

[Assessing Learners Using Distance Learning Curriculum 17](#_Toc28345576)

[Instructional Delivery Models 17](#_Toc28345577)

[Counting Distance Learning Contact Hours 18](#_Toc28345578)

[ABE Auditing Requirements 19](#_Toc28345579)

[Federally Reported Distance Learning Participants 19](#_Toc28345580)

[Approved Distance Learning Curricula 19](#_Toc28345581)

[To Get a Distance Learning Curriculum Approved 20](#_Toc28345582)

[Helpful Definitions 20](#_Toc28345583)

[Outcome Measures Definitions 21](#_Toc28345584)

[Test Benchmarks 21](#_Toc28345585)

[Adult Basic Education (ABE) Levels 1-6 21](#_Toc28345586)

[English as a Second Language (ESL) Levels 1-6 23](#_Toc28345587)

[EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) 24](#_Toc28345588)

[LITERACY/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 24](#_Toc28345589)

[ABE Level 1: Beginning Literacy (ELA) 25](#_Toc28345590)

[ABE Level 2: Beginning Basic (ELA) 26](#_Toc28345591)

[ABE Level 3: Low Intermediate (ELA) 28](#_Toc28345592)

[ABE Level 4: High Intermediate (ELA) 29](#_Toc28345593)

[ABE Level 5: Low Adult Secondary (ELA) 30](#_Toc28345594)

[ABE Level 6: High Adult Secondary (ELA) 32](#_Toc28345595)

[Exhibit: Quantitative Analysis Chart for Determining Text Complexity 34](#_Toc28345596)

[MATHEMATICS 34](#_Toc28345597)

[ABE Level 1: Beginning Literacy (Math) 35](#_Toc28345598)

[ABE Level 2: Beginning Basic (Math) 35](#_Toc28345599)

[ABE Level 3: Low Intermediate (Math) 36](#_Toc28345600)

[ABE Level 4: Middle Intermediate (Math) 37](#_Toc28345601)

[ABE Level 5: High Intermediate (Math) 38](#_Toc28345602)

[ABE Level 6: Adult Secondary (Math) 39](#_Toc28345603)

[EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS (ESL) 41](#_Toc28345604)

[For More Information 43](#_Toc28345605)

# 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 and/or locators 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 and/or locator test score. Agencies should administer appraisal/locator 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 and/or locator 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 “Uniform Test Administration Times” later in this document.

### Resources for Information and Assistance

**Minnesota Department of Education:** Contact Brad Hasskamp via phone at 651-582-8594 or via [email](mailto:brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us) (brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us).

**State ABE Assessment Training (Southwest ABE)**: State assessment trainers and information can be found on their [web site](http://www.mnabeassessment.com/) (www.mnabeassessment.com).

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

**CASAS:** CASAS, the publisher of the CASAS assessments, has information available at their [web site](http://www.casas.org) (www.casas.org). Individuals can also 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](mailto:ltaylor@casas.org) (ltaylor@casas.org).

**TABE:** Data Recognition Corporation/CTB, the publisher of the TABE, has information available at their [web site](http://www.tabetest.com/) (www.tabetest.com).

# General Assessment Requirements

## Learners to be Assessed

All learners reported in the National Reporting System must be assessed using federally- and state-approved standardized assessments.

## Assessments Permitted

Minnesota has authorized the CASAS, TABE and BEST Plus standardized assessments for use in establishing NRS educational functioning levels. Additionally, assessments 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, and
* Have evidence linking them to the NRS Educational Functioning Levels.

### BEST Plus

*For Levels:* ***ESL 1-6***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Name/Series*** | ***Content*** | ***Format*** | ***Forms/Levels*** |
| **Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Plus 2.0** | ESL**\*** | Paper-based,  Computer-adaptive | D, E, F |

*\*Approved by OCTAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes through June 30, 2021.*

### CASAS

*For Levels:* ***ABE 1-6***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Name/Series*** | ***Content*** | ***Format*** | ***Forms/Levels*** |
| **GOALS** | Reading | Paper-based, Computer-based | 901R-908R |
| **GOALS** | Math | Paper-based, Computer-based | 900, 913, 914, 917, 918 |

*For Levels:* ***ESL 1-6***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***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 |
| **Life and Work** | Listening\* | Computer-based,  Paper-based | 981L-986L |

*\*Approved by OCTAE and the Minnesota Department of Education for NRS purposes for ESL Levels through June 30, 2021.*

### TABE

*For Levels:* ***ABE 1-6***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Name/Series*** | ***Content*** | ***Format*** | ***Forms/Levels*** |
| **11 and 12** | * Reading * Math * Language | Computer-based  Paper-based | L: Literacy  E: Easy  M: Medium  D: Difficult  A: Advanced |

Learners 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 must be pre- and post-tested in at least one modality using a one of the above noted test series.

**Uniform Test Administration Times: Specific Guidance on Pre- and Post-Testing**

Learners should be assessed in the areas that are the focus of instruction, using the appropriate TABE, CASAS or BEST Plus 2.0 standardized test in reading, math, writing, speaking, or listening comprehension. Pre-tests must be administered within the first 12 hours of ABE program participation unless there is an approved exception directly from the Minnesota Department of Education. 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.

Post-testing must not occur before at least 40 hours of instruction unless a specific, individual waiver is granted by a local program administrator. Post-tests may be administered before 40 hours of instruction since their last assessment with the same test type and modality only if a student completes a course of study and/or is ready to complete a secondary, college-ready, or occupational assessment or credential, and plans to exit the program. Waivers must be kept in the student file.

Programs need not provide additional documentation for students who are post-tested at intervals of greater than 40 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 during a previous reporting period may serve as a pre-test for the current reporting period, as long as the new pre-test occurred within the previous Federal reporting year, and at least 40 hours of instruction have occurred. The “look-back” period for tests extends to July 1st of the previous Federal reporting year. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for “stop outs” returning to adult education classes must be used, provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same time frame.

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. These test results may not be reported unless at least 40 hours of instruction have occurred since the previous test.

**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.

## 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 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 without changing what the test is supposed to measure.

*BEST Plus 2.0:* When administering the BEST Plus 2.0, Minnesota Adult Basic Education programs should seek guidance from the Center for Applied Linguistics, publisher of the BEST Plus 2.0, 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 Data Recognition Corporation, publisher of the TABE, in their publication *Guidelines to Inclusive Testing* available at their [web site](http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_Guidelines_to_Inclusive_Testing_2017.pdf) (http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE\_Guidelines\_to\_Inclusive\_Testing\_2017.pdf).

**Testing Exceptions:** All students must participate in pre- and post-testing with a few exceptions:

1. Second language learners for whom standardized testing does not yield a valid pre-test score can be placed at the ESL level 1;
2. Students with disabilities that cannot be tested and no appropriate accommodation is available (e.g. students with visual loss and not fluent in Braille) can be exempted and must be marked in the student’s file on SiD; and
3. Students who are initially placed at the ABE level 6 level and who have a goal of passing the GED or obtaining a high school diploma are strongly encouraged but not required to 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 2.0:** The BEST Plus 2.0 assessment can only be administered by instructors who have completed the Center for Applied Linguistics training.

**CASAS:** CASAS assessments cannot be used by instructors that have not completed CASAS training by certified personnel provided and/or approved by Minnesota State ABE Supplemental Service Assessment Trainers.

**TABE:** TABE assessments cannot be administered by instructors that have not completed TABE training provided and/or approved by Minnesota State ABE Supplemental Service Assessment Trainers.

**Training Resources:** Southwest ABE (Minnesota’s ABE supplemental service provider) will provide TABE and CASAS assessment training for instructors and other test administrators. Trainings will be provided at the annual Support Services Conference, 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 through the established certification system. BEST Plus 2.0 training will be provided by CAL certified trainers when there is sufficient demand.

State assessment training information can be found on Minnesota ABE Assessment web site (www.mnabeassessment.com).

**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 Educationrequires 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 Student Information Database (SID) 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
* GED Test (but can be used to document completion of a secondary credential)
* GED Ready
* TABE Locator tests
* Teacher/program designed tests
* Teacher observation
* TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)
* Using different instruments for pre- and post-testing
* Using the same form of the test for pre- and post-testing

# Distance Education

## Background

The Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) in the United States Department of Education defines Distance Education as:

“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 by mail, telephone, e-mail, or online technologies and software.

Note: For participants who receive both distance education and traditional classroom instruction during a program year (such as through a blended distance-classroom approach or concurrent enrollment in both types of instruction), the State must have a policy, consistent with the NRS definition, that defines how local programs are to classify the participant. For NRS reporting, States can count a participant only once, as either a distance education participant or a traditional classroom participant.”

*Source: Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: National Reporting System for Adult Education, found online at the* [*NRS Web site*](http://www.nrsweb.org/) *(www.nrsweb.org).*

Distance learning programs are often a good fit for non-traditional learners’ schedules. They may hold particular potential for learners who live some distance from the nearest Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, those with work schedules that make regular class attendance difficult, and learners in classes who want to further study on their own.

Studies and experience demonstrate that ABE learners participating in hybrid/blended distance learning, which combines face-to-face with distance learning, show increased NRS achievement over those participating in only one of these components. This model thus shows great promise in facilitating more rapid learner achievement.

Digital literacy, including basic computer skills and information literacy, is integral to distance learning. Learners need the ability to access online resources, and to effectively assess, evaluate, and use a broad range of information. Minnesota ABE has adopted the Northstar Digital Literacy Standards as state standards, a Northstar location license is provided to each ABE consortium, and passing the core assessments is required for the Minnesota Standard Adult High School Diploma. Integrating digital literacy instruction into a wide range of ABE courses is encouraged.

Digital literacy and distance learning skills are essential to success in the workplace and in higher education. Building the capacity to offer more distance education opportunities across Minnesota ABE programs in an equitable fashion is one of the primary goals identified by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) ABE Office.

### Overview of Distance Learning Delivery Requirements in Minnesota ABE

Intake and orientation may be provided face-to-face or at a distance, while pre- and post-testing for ABE learners accessing distance learning must be provided face-to-face. Training requirements for ABE staff to deliver distance education vary according to the distance education platform(s) utilized. Only agencies that have completed required training on the specific distance learning platform(s) selected, as well as state mandated DL professional development (see Professional Development section) will be allowed to count reimbursable proxy hours for their learners.

Depending on the distance learning platform, Minnesota allows a “time-on-task” approach or a mastery approach to assign asynchronous proxy hours for work accomplished.

1. Time-on-task platforms have a mechanism to track actual learner time engaged with the platform.
2. Mastery platforms utilize achievement or demonstration of skills sufficient for a learner to move from one unit to the next, through completion of curriculum units and/or passing quizzes assessing lesson comprehension and completion. Mastery proxy hours are not necessarily equal to time spent working online. These proxy hours are established based on pilot studies showing the average learner time required to master specific material.

Note: Both types of proxy hours include an allowance for staff time needed to manage learner use of the platform.

ABE programs must maintain records of proxy hours to meet state and federal reporting requirements. ABE Program Guidelines for determining proxy hours (PH) for DL platforms can be found on the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Website](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org) (www.mnabe-distancelearning.org). Proxy hours must be recorded in the ABE data system in classes with titles that include the name of the distance learning curricula and the words “proxy hours,” for example: “Edmentum/Plato Proxy Hours.” Note that programs must also maintain records for each learner identifying the unit/lesson/module completed along with the corresponding proxy hours. (More information about required documentation can be found in the ABE Auditing Requirements section of this policy.) In most cases a digital document, pdf, or spreadsheet from a platform's reporting/admin system should be sufficient.

## General Distance Learning Requirements

### Professional Development

Professional development (PD) designed to facilitate effective DL delivery is a key component of DL in Minnesota ABE.

**PD Requirements**: All ABE staff who work in Distance Learning must complete either DL Basics or DL101. Staff must complete *DL Basics* within three months of beginning to work in the area of DL (existing staff) or within three months of employment (new staff), unless they have completed, or are in the process of completing *DL 101*.

***DL Basics*** provides an overview of DL essentials for managers, instructors, and support staff. It is available online at the [Minnesota Literacy Council’s Online Course Catalog](http://online.themlc.org/login/index.php) (http://online.themlc.org/login/index.php). *DL Basics* reviews state DL policy, provides information on DL learner recruitment, screening, assessment, instruction, and evaluation, and defines proxy hours and attendance requirements. *DL Basics* is required for all ABE staff providing DL programming. A face to face training can be requested from the DL Supplemental Services staff as an alternative.

**DL 101** is a comprehensive cohort professional development option for DL teachers and managers. Programs develop and implement a distance learning plan incorporating best practices. Additional support and technical assistance is also provided. **DL 101 is strongly recommended for all programs or consortia offering distance learning.**

**DL 102** includes more advanced study of actual DL delivery. Courses for managers and teachers are available for those who have completed DL 101. Participation is encouraged but not required.

**Northstar Foundations** is available online through the [Minnesota Literacy Council’s Online Course Catalog](http://online.themlc.org/login/index.php) (http://online.themlc.org/login/index.php). This course provides an overview of the Northstar Digital Literacy standards and digital literacy integration in the ABE classroom. It is not required, but provides excellent resources for all ABE teachers.

### Assessing Learners Using Distance Learning Curriculum

Distance learners must be assessed under the same guidelines as all adult learners in the state and ABE programs must adhere to the Minnesota ABE Assessment Policy, which can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE Law, Policy and Guidance page](http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance) (http://www.mnabe.org/program-management/law-policy-guidance).

### Instructional Delivery Models

There are 3 instructional delivery models using distance learning curricula:

1. Distance Education – Learners work independently at a distance or in a site’s computer lab and are not enrolled in face-to-face classes; this mode of instruction is appropriate for learners with strong computer literacy and independent study skills.
2. Hybrid or Blended – This is a delivery model in which a classroom instructor is involved in assigning distance learning work to be done outside of class and is involved in the support and monitoring of learners' progress in the online platform. In this mode of instruction, one teacher supports both face to face and online instruction for a single group of learners, and intentionally integrates the two modes of instruction for the learners’ benefit.
3. Dual Enrolled - In this delivery model, the learner takes face to face class(es) and is also enrolled in a pure or supported DL distance learning program, but the two modes of instruction do not overlap in content or in teacher/staff. The two modes of instruction operate independently of each other.

Proxy hours may be counted when the following conditions are met:

1. The ABE program is using an approved DL curriculum found on the ABE DL website.
2. Learners are working independently on the online curriculum either:
   1. At a distance (not at the ABE program site); or
   2. At an ABE site (e.g. computer lab) and regular ABE contact hours are **not** collected for that same lab time.
3. Learners meet requirements for distance learning curricula used, such as the minimum test scores for entry and complying with intended product use, as defined by the distance learning curriculum developer. (For more information on ABE program guidelines for determining online education learner eligibility, go to the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Website](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org) (www.mnabe-distancelearning.org).)

Proxy hours may not be counted for in-class work, which generates contact hours.

### Counting Distance Learning Contact Hours

Classroom (seat time) hours and proxy hours (PH) will be recorded as separate classes in the state data system.

There are two possible “types” of contact hours involved in distance education:

1. **Synchronous Hours**: Face to face or live online interactions between an instructor and learner(s). Occur in distance learning for orientation, counseling, pre- and post-testing, or supplemental classroom instruction, either face to face or via online technologies such as webinars, chat, Facetime, Google hangout, Skype, etc. For all synchronous hours, Minnesota ABE programs will follow the ABE Contact Hour Policy. **This time needs to be recorded as contact hours (similar to in-class time).**
2. **Asynchronous Hours**: Instruction is provided when a learner works independently using one or more of the distance learning platforms listed in the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Website](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org) (www.mnabe-distancelearning.org). These hours could happen off-site or on-site, as long as in-class contact hours are not counted for the same activity. Off-site asynchronous hours could be completed at a learner’s home, at a public library, or any other location a learner is completing a distance learning curriculum. An example of on-site asynchronous hours includes a learner working in an ABE program’s computer lab after class, when this time is not counted as in-class contact hours. Asynchronous DL hours are counted as mastery or time-on-task proxy hours, depending on the platform used. **This time needs to be recorded as proxy hours.**

For asynchronous hours, the manner in which proxy hours are determined will vary depending upon the curriculum used. For information on proxy hours assigned to specific approved DL platforms, please refer to the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Website](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org) (www.mnabe-distancelearning.org).

### ABE Auditing Requirements

For auditing purposes, programs must keep records documenting student distance learning achievements and proxy hours claimed. **A digital document, pdf, or spreadsheet from a platform's reporting or admin system is generally sufficient.** Some other acceptable measures of documentation include:

* Printed learner screenshots
* Printed software-generated reporting tables
* Teacher-signed learner logs

The documentation must:

* Include the name of the distance learning product
* List the specific unit(s) the learner completed or mastered
* Show that a learner completed and/or mastered the unit according to standards
* Include a date of completion

In an audit, programs must present all required documentation or risk having to pay back state and federal money earned from undocumented proxy hours.

For specific documentation requirements by distance learning curricula, go to the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Website](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org/) (www.mnabe-distancelearning.org).

### Federally Reported Distance Learning Participants

The Minnesota Department of Education’s ABE Office has defined “Distance Education” participants as those ABE students with at least 50% of their annual participation generated via proxy hours. Distance Education students are reported by the Minnesota Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Education in statewide reports.

### Approved Distance Learning Curricula

There are two categories of approved DL platforms available to Minnesota ABE:

1. Products purchased and supported with state funds (currently Edmentum and Burlington English).
2. Products that are chosen by and purchased by individual programs/consortia (or are free).

A current list of approved DL platforms can be found at [MNABE Distance Learning Page on Approved Platforms](http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/approved-dl-platforms) (http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/approved-dl-platforms).

### To Get a Distance Learning Curriculum Approved

Information and forms detailing what an ABE program need in order to approve a distance learning curriculum for proxy hour purposes can be found at [MNABE Distance Learning Page on Approved Platforms](http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/approved-dl-platforms) (http://mnabe-distancelearning.org/approved-dl-platforms).

## Helpful Definitions

**Distance Learning (DL) and Distance Education (DE)**

**DE**: A broad term to cover all aspects of programming/instruction that allows for learning outside the classroom

**DL**: What learners are actually doing/working on. We usually use ‘DL’ in MN ABE.

**Pure DL**: Delivered almost totally at a distance; very minimal face-to-face interaction, if any.

**Supported DL**: Learner receives face to face orientation, but after that most or all work and interaction are at a distance (most common in MN ABE).

**Hybrid Learning = Blended learning (BL)**: There are several instructional models, but generally, it’s regular classroom instruction combined with distance learning, where distance is added to intensify or accelerate instruction. Classroom teacher is involved in assigning online work, checking on, and supporting learners in that work. Moves the role of technology beyond that of a useful tool to support learning to being the actual place where the instruction, activities, and assessment occur. Most staff time-intensive, but learners also make the most progress/gains.

**Classroom Technology Integration (CTI)**: Teachers leverage technologies to support their in-class instruction, use class time to strengthen learners’ digital literacy skills, or both.

**Dual Enrolled**: The learner who is taking F2F class(es) and is also enrolled in pure or supported DL, but the two do not overlap in content or in teacher/staff (also common in MN ABE).

**Proxy Hours (PH)**: DL contact hours that may be earned based on face to face time or mastery of content, depending on how the DL platform is constructed and used by learners.

**Synchronous** (learning, communication, etc.): Instruction is happening with teachers and students at the same time; interactions are conducted in real time. Examples include face to face classes, live webinars, chat, Facetime, Google hangout, Skype, etc.

**Asynchronous** (or sequential): Instruction is not happening with teachers and students at the same time. Examples include email, blog, video, online discussion and comments, online courses, Twitter, Facebook, etc.

# Outcome Measures Definitions

These are the leveled scores for the approved tests utilizing the Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for Adult Basic Education, as established by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). The level descriptors outline Language/English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and English as a Second Language (ESL) skills at the 12 levels for ABE students according to pre- and post-tests (levels ABE 1-6 and ESL 1-6). The ABE levels include Language/English Language Arts and Mathematics descriptions of student abilities at each level.

## Test Benchmarks

### Adult Basic Education (ABE) Levels 1-6

| **Educational Functioning Level (EFL)** | **Test Benchmarks** |
| --- | --- |
| ABE Level 1  Beginning ABE Literacy | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE[[1]](#footnote-1) (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 0–1):   * Reading: 300–441 * Mathematics: 300–448 * Language: 300–457   **CASAS[[2]](#footnote-2) GOALS** scale scores:   * Reading: 203 and below * Mathematics: 193 and below |
| ABE Level 2  Beginning Basic Education | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 2–3):   * Reading: 442–500 * Mathematics: 449–495 * Language: 458–510   **CASAS GOALS** scale scores:   * Reading: 204-216 * Mathematics: 194-203 |
| ABE Level 3  Low Intermediate Basic Education | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 4–5):   * Reading: 501–535 * Mathematics: 496–536 * Language: 511–546   **CASAS GOALS** scale scores:   * Reading: 217-227 * Mathematics: 204-214 |
| ABE Level 4  High Intermediate Basic Education | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 6–8):   * Reading: 536–575 * Mathematics: 537–595 * Language: 547–583   **CASAS GOALS** scale scores:   * Reading: 228-238 * Mathematics: 215-225 |
| ABE Level 5  Low Adult Secondary Education | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 9–10):   * Reading: 576–616 * Mathematics: 596–656 * Language: 584–630   **CASAS GOALS** scale scores:   * Reading: 239-248 * Mathematics: 226-235 |
| ABE Level 6  High Adult Secondary Education | **Approved Tests Aligned to ABE EFL Descriptors**  **TABE (11–12)** scale scores (grade level 11–12):   * Reading: 617–800 * Mathematics: 657–800 * Language: 631–800   **CASAS Reading GOALS scale scores:**   * Reading: 249 and above * Mathematics: 236 and above |

### English as a Second Language (ESL) Levels 1-6

| **Educational Functioning Level** | **Test Benchmarks** |
| --- | --- |
| Beginning ESL Literacy  ESL Level 1 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 180 and below * Listening: 162-180   **BEST[[3]](#footnote-3) Plus 2.0:** 88-361 |
| Low Beginning ESL  ESL Level 2 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 181–190 * Listening: 181–189   **BEST Plus 2.0:** 362-427 |
| High Beginning ESL  ESL Level 3 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 191–200 * Listening: 190–199   **BEST Plus 2.0:** 428–452 |
| Low Intermediate ESL  ESL Level 4 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 201–210 * Listening: 200–209   **BEST Plus 2.0:** 453–484 |
| High Intermediate ESL  ESL Level 5 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 211–220 * Listening: 210–218   **BEST Plus 2.0:** 485–524 |
| Advanced ESL  ESL Level 6 | **CASAS Life and Work scale scores:**   * Reading: 221–235 * Listening: 219–227   **BEST Plus:** 525–564 (exit 565 and higher) |

More information on the level descriptors and assessment can be found at the [National Reporting System website’s Technical Assistance for Assessment Page](https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/ta-tools/assessment) (https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/ta-tools/assessment).

## EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)[[4]](#footnote-4)

### LITERACY/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

#### Introduction

The educational functioning level (EFL) descriptors for Literacy/English Language Arts are intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. They are divided into six EFLs: Beginning Literacy; Beginning Basic; Low Intermediate; High Intermediate; Low Adult Secondary; and High Adult Secondary. The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at any given level but provide examples of the most critical concepts and skills for the level. The descriptors use the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education (CCR) as the foundation.

While these narrative descriptors address the most critical concepts for assessment and instruction for adult learners, lesson plans and test items should be based on additional critical concepts from State instructional frameworks and standards, as appropriate for the learner and State requirements.

The EFLs for Literacy/English Language arts are organized into reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language domains. Emphasis was placed on reading and writing because most instruction and assessment attention will be paid to these domains for ABE students. In addition, the descriptors were further informed by OCTAE’s Framework for Employability Skills to ensure the levels paid adequate attention to workforce preparation.

#### Reading

The reading sections of the descriptors are consistently more comprehensive than the other domains. Reading is a critical area for college and career readiness. One of the elements in the reading descriptors that draws clear distinctions between competencies required at each level is the complexity of the text that students are to be reading. The EFLs specify a staircase of increasing text complexity for students to master from beginning basic reading through the college and career readiness level. The comprehension skills of reading are to be applied to level-appropriate complex text. The reading domain elements of the descriptors carry within it references to other key skills from the other domains and workforce preparation skills. Examples of this include listening comprehension as a supplement to reading comprehension at levels 1 and 2 so students can work with the richer ideas adult students can handle intellectually, if not yet independently through their own reading. It also includes integrating and evaluating information from a variety of media, including translating quantitative or technical information presented visually or in words. Learning to work with diverse media is an important job skill as well as a critical applied academic skill. Another example is an emphasis on research that includes a combination of reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills—again as a way to connect the domains in important ways and to create the EFLs as a focused and useful document.

#### Writing

Details about the level of writing proficiency required at each level have been pared to draw clear distinctions between competencies required at each level. The descriptors emphasize writing arguments and writing to inform and explain from Level 3 and beyond. Both writing types stress writing to sources, and asking students to draw evidence from texts is emphasized in the descriptors. With writing, many of the process standards were not included because process proficiency is hard to measure. In addition, reference is consistently made to research skills in both the reading and writing sections of each level, as these skills are important to writing.

#### Speaking and Listening

The speaking and listening descriptors at each level ware connected closely to workforce preparation and the Employability Skills Framework. These skills have the benefit of both being measurable and clearly related to citizenship, work and life success. Collaborative conversations and teamwork are emphasized at *every* level, as is students' use of evidence. In this context of speaking and listening, the descriptors reflect use of listening comprehension capacities (particularly in Levels 1 and 2 to augment students’ lower reading comprehension abilities), evidence in conversation, ability to evaluate what others are saying, and the capacity to share information effectively with others.

#### Language

In the language domain, descriptors consistent with workforce preparation from the Employability Skills Framework and are vital to attaining college and career readiness from each level such as a growth in students’ grammar and punctuation skills, as well as their growth in vocabulary.

### ABE Level 1: Beginning Literacy (ELA)

*Reading****:*** Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Literacy Level comprehend how print corresponds to spoken language and are able to demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sound-letter relationships (phonetic patterns), including consonant digraphs and blends. In particular, students at this level are able to recognize and produce rhyming words, blend and segment onsets and rhymes, isolate and pronounce initial, medial, and final sounds, add or substitute individual sounds, and blend and segment single syllable words. They are able to decode two- syllable words following basic patterns as well as recognize common high frequency words by sight. Individuals are able to read simple decodable texts with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression. They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases in texts with clear and explicit context.

Individuals ready to exit this level are able to determine main ideas, retell key details, and ask and answer questions about key details in simple texts. Individuals are also able to use the illustrations in the text(s), whether print or digital, to describe its key ideas (e.g., maps, charts, photographs, cartoons). They also are able to use text features, both print and digital, to locate key facts or information. When listening to text above their current independent reading level, they are able to identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text, describe the connections between ideas within a text, and examine the basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic.

*Writing****:*** Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Literacy Level are able to write basic sight words and familiar words and phrases as they compose simple sentences or phrases. This includes writing simple informative texts in which they supply some facts about a topic and narratives that include some details regarding what happened. They use simple transition and temporal words to signal event order (e.g., so, and, because, when, next, finally). With support, they are able to gather and use information from provided sources, both print and digital, to answer a simple research question.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in conversations of short duration, collaborating with diverse partners and groups, while respecting individual differences. This includes following agreed upon rules for discussion and responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges. Individuals are able to describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, producing complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation. They can discuss what they have heard read aloud and ask and answer questions about it.

*Language****:*** When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to correctly use frequently occurring nouns, verbs (past, present, and future), adjectives, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions. When writing sentences individuals correctly use capitalization, ending punctuation, and commas in dates and to separate single words in a series. They are able to spell words with common patterns and frequently occurring irregular words. Other words they spell phonetically. In response to prompts, they are able to produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences orally. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words, by applying their knowledge of frequently occurring roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. They are able to distinguish shades of meaning among verbs (e.g., look, glance, stare, glare) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by choosing them or acting out their meanings.

### ABE Level 2: Beginning Basic (ELA)

*Reading****:*** Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Basic Level are able to decode multi- syllable words, distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words, and recognize the spelling-sound correspondences for common vowel teams. They also are able to identify and understand the meaning of the most common prefixes and suffixes. They can read common irregular sight words. Individuals are able to read level appropriate texts (e.g., texts with a Lexile Measure of between 420 and 820) with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.[[5]](#footnote-5) They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases in level-appropriate complex texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to determine main ideas, ask and answer questions about key details in texts and show how those details support the main idea. Individuals also are able to explain how specific aspects of both digital and print illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words of a text. They are able to compare and contrast the most important points and key details of two texts on the same topic. When listening to text above their current independent reading level, they are able to describe the relationship between ideas in a text in terms of time, sequence, and cause/effect, as well as use text features and search tools, both print and digital, to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently. They also are able to describe how reasons support specific points an author makes in a text and identify the author’s main purpose or what the author wants to answer, explain or describe, as well as distinguish their own point of view from that of the author’s.

*Writing:* Individuals ready to exit the Beginning Basic Level are able to write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons. They are able to write simple informative texts in which they examine a topic and convey information clearly. They also are able to write narratives with details that describe actions, thoughts, and feelings. They use transition and temporal words (e.g., also, another, more, but) to link ideas and signal event order. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to use technology to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others. They are able to conduct short research projects and summarize their learning in print. This includes taking brief notes from both print and digital sources, and sorting evidence into provided categories.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in a range of collaborative conversations with diverse partners and groups, respecting individual differences. This includes gaining the floor in respectful way, linking their comments to the remarks of others, and expressing their own ideas, clearly in light of the discussions. Individuals are able to report on a topic or text or recount an experience, with appropriate facts, and relevant, descriptive details. They are able to speak in complete sentences appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification. They can discuss what they have heard read aloud and provide the main ideas and appropriate elaboration and detail about the information presented.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to correctly use regular and irregular nouns and verbs, comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. When writing simple, compound and complex sentences, individuals use correct subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement. They also use correct capitalization, ending punctuation, commas, and apostrophes to form contractions and possessives. They also are able to spell words with conventional patterns and suffixes. They are able to use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g., word patterns, ending rules) in writing words. In response to prompts, they are able to produce, expand, and rearrange simple and compound sentences. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words in level-appropriate complex texts, including academic words, by applying their knowledge of roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. They are able to distinguish literal from non-literal meaning of words, and shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, wondered, suspected). They are able to demonstrate understanding of and use general academic words that signal spatial and temporal relationships.

### ABE Level 3: Low Intermediate (ELA)

*Reading:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Intermediate Level are able to read fluently text of the complexity demanded of this level (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 740 and 1010).[[6]](#footnote-6) They are able to use knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and roots and affixes to accurately decode unfamiliar words. They are able to determine the meaning of words and phrases (e.g., metaphors and similes) in level-appropriate complex texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are able to make logical inferences, summarize central ideas or themes, and explain how they are supported by key details. They are able to explain events, procedures, or ideas in historical, scientific, or technical texts, including what happened and why. They are able to describe the overall structure of a text and compare and contrast the structures of two texts. Individuals ready to exit this level are also able to interpret information presented visually, orally or quantitatively to find an answer to a question or solve a problem. They display this facility with both print and digital media. Individuals are able to explain how authors use reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text and can integrate information from several texts, whether print, media, or a mix, on the same topic. They are able to describe how point of view influences how events are described. They are able to analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting similarities and differences. They are able to produce valid evidence for their findings and assertions.

*Writing:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Intermediate Level are able to write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with facts and logically ordered reasons. They are able to produce informative texts in which they develop a topic with concrete facts and details. They convey information clearly with precise language and well-organized paragraphs. They link ideas, opinions and reasons with words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., another, specifically, consequently, because). They are also able to use technology (including the Internet) to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others. They are able to conduct short research projects, making frequent use of on-line as well as print sources. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. They are able to summarize or paraphrase information from and provide a list of those sources.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit this level are able to participate in a range of collaborative conversations with diverse partners and groups, respecting individual differences. This includes demonstrating an understanding of teamwork and working well with others by carrying out their assigned roles, and posing and responding to specific questions, and making comments that contribute to and elaborate on the remarks of others. Individuals are able to report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and providing appropriate facts, and relevant, descriptive details that support the main ideas or themes. They are able to differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate. They also are able to paraphrase and summarize what they have heard aloud and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit this level are able to use verb tenses to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions correctly and recognize inappropriate shifts in verb tense. They use prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections properly. Individuals write simple, compound and complex sentences and use correct subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement throughout a piece of writing. They also use correct capitalization, commas, and underlining, quotation marks, and italics to indicate titles of works. They are able to correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., to, too, two; there, their) and spell correctly, consulting references as needed. They are able to produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons as well as expand, combine and reduce sentences for meaning, reader interest and style. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple- meaning words in level-appropriate complex texts, including academic words, by applying their knowledge of roots and affixes, as well as sentence-level context. Individuals are able to interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors. They also are able to recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs. They are able to demonstrate understanding of and use general academic words that signal precise actions or emotions (e.g., whined, stammered), signal contrast (e.g., however, nevertheless), or other logical relationships (e.g., however, similarly), and are basic to a particular topic (e.g. endangered when discussing animal preservation).

### ABE Level 4: High Intermediate (ELA)

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit the High Intermediate Level are able to read fluently text of the complexity demanded of this level (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 925 and 1185).[[7]](#footnote-7) They display increasing facility with academic vocabulary and are able to analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone in level-appropriate complex texts. Individuals are able to make logical inferences by offering several pieces of textual evidence. This includes citing evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources in history, as well as analysis of science and technical texts. They are able to summarize and analyze central ideas, including how they are conveyed through particular details in the text. They also are able to analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between ideas or events and how major sections of a text contribute to the development of the ideas. They also are able to follow multistep procedures. Individuals are able to identify aspects of a text that reveal point of view and assess how point of view shapes style and content in texts. In addition, they are able to evaluate the validity of specific claims an author makes through the sufficiency of the reasoning and evidence supplied in the text. This includes analyzing how an author responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints. They are able to analyze how multiple texts address similar themes, including how authors acknowledge and respond to conflicting evidence or viewpoints and include or avoid particular facts. Individuals are also able to analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media as well as integrate and evaluate content from those sources, including quantitative or technical information presented visually and in words. They are able to produce valid evidence for their findings and assertions, make sound decisions, and solve problems.

*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to introduce claims, acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence, and organize them logically in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the topic. When writing informative texts, individuals are able to examine a topic through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant facts, concrete details, quotations and other information to aid comprehension. Individuals create cohesion in their writing by clarifying the relationships among ideas, reasons, and evidence; using appropriate transitions; and including a logical progression of ideas, and maintaining consistency in style and tone. Individuals are able to use specific word choices appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. They also are able to use technology to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources. They conduct short research projects, drawing on several sources. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to locate and organize information, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and communicate the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit the High Intermediate level collaborate well as a member of team by building on others’ ideas, expressing their own clearly and maintaining a positive attitude. This includes following the rules for collegial discussions and decision-making and tracking progress toward specific goals and deadlines. It also includes the ability to pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others’ questions and comments with relevant evidence and ideas. During these discussions, individuals are able to qualify, alter, or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented by others. Just as in writing, individuals are able to delineate a speaker’s argument, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance of the evidence. They are able to identify when irrelevant evidence is introduced. They also are able to present their own claims and findings that emphasize salient points in a focused and coherent manner, with relevant evidence, valid reasoning, and well-chosen details. Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* When writing and speaking, individuals ready to exit the High Intermediate level are able to ensure pronouns are in the proper case, recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person, and correct vague or unclear pronouns. They know how to form all verb tenses, and recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood. They know how to recognize and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. They are able to choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating redundancy and wordiness as well as maintaining consistency in style and tone. Though errors may be present, the meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level–appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

### ABE Level 5: Low Adult Secondary (ELA)

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit Low Adult Secondary Level are able to read fluently texts that measure at the secondary level of complexity (e.g., a Lexile Measure of between 1050 and 1335).[[8]](#footnote-8) This includes increasing facility with academic vocabulary and figurative language in level-appropriate complex texts. This includes determining the meaning of symbols and key terms used in a specific scientific or technical context. They are able to analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Individuals are able to make logical and well- supported inferences about those complex texts. They are able to analyze the development of central ideas over the course of a text and explain how they are refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or portions of text. They are able to provide an objective summary of a text. They are able to analyze in detail a series of events described in text and determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them. They also are able to follow complex multistep directions or procedures.

Individuals are able to compare the point of view of two or more authors writing about the same or similar topics. They are able to evaluate the validity of specific claims an author makes through the sufficiency and relevance of the reasoning and evidence supplied. They also are able to identify false statements and fallacious reasoning. They are able to analyze how multiple texts address related themes and concepts, including challenging texts, such as seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address). In addition, they are able to contrast the findings presented in a text, noting whether those findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts. Individuals are also able to translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically into words. Through their reading and research, they are able to cite strong and thorough textual evidence for their findings and assertions to make informed decisions and solve problems.

*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to introduce precise claims, distinguish the claims from alternate or opposing claims, and support claims with clear reasons and relevant and sufficient evidence. When writing informative texts, they are able to examine a topic through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of well chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic. They use appropriate and varied transitions as well as consistency in style and tone to link major sections of the text, create cohesion, and establish clear relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence.

Individuals use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. They are also able to take advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and display information flexibly and dynamically. They conduct short research projects as well as more sustained research projects to make informed decisions and solve problems. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to gather and organize information, assess the credibility, accuracy, and usefulness of each source, and communicate the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism.

*Speaking and Listening:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Adult Secondary level are able to participate in a thoughtful, respectful, and well-reasoned exchange of ideas as a member of a team. As they collaborate with peers, they are able to set rules for collegial discussions and decision- making, clear goals and deadlines. They are able to propel these conversations forward by clarifying, verifying or challenging ideas that are presented, actively incorporating others into the discussion, responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, and summarizing points of agreement and disagreement. They also are able to qualify, alter, or justify their own views and understanding in light of the evidence and reasoning presented by others. Just as in writing, individuals are able to evaluate a speaker’s point of view, and in particular, assess the links among ideas, word choice, and points of emphasis and tone used. They also are able to present their own findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.

Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* Individuals ready to exit the Low Adult Secondary level demonstrate strong control of English grammar, usage, and mechanics and use these elements to enhance the presentation of ideas both in speech and writing. This includes the use of parallel structure and the correct use of various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. Though some errors may be present, meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level- appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

### ABE Level 6: High Adult Secondary (ELA)

*Reading:* Individuals who are ready to exit High Adult Secondary Level are able to read fluently at the college and career readiness level of text complexity (e.g., a Lexile Measure between 1185 and 1385).[[9]](#footnote-9) This includes increasing facility with academic vocabulary and figurative language sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level. They are able to analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Individuals are able to make logical and well-supported inferences about those complex texts. They are able to summarize the challenging ideas, concepts or processes contained within them. They are able to paraphrase texts in simpler but still accurate terms. Whether they are conducting analyses of complex primary and secondary sources in history or in scientific and technical texts, they are able to analyze how the ideas and concepts within them develop and interact. Individuals are able to assess how points of view shape style and content in texts with particular attention to distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Individuals are able to analyze how multiple texts address related themes and concepts, including challenging texts such as U.S. founding documents (Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights). In addition, they are able to compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. Individuals are also able to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media in order to address a question. Through their reading and research at complex levels, they are able to cite strong and thorough textual evidence for their findings and assertions to make sound decisions and solve problems.

*Writing:* Writing in response to one or more text(s), individuals ready to exit this level are able to compose arguments and informative texts (this includes the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes). When writing arguments, they are able to create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaim(s), reasons and evidence. They fully develop claims and counterclaims, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns. When writing informative texts, they are able to organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions through the effective selection and analysis of content. They use appropriate and varied transitions to clarify the relationships among complex ideas, create cohesion, and link major sections of the text. Individuals are able to maintain a formal style while they attend to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. They are also able to take advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and display information flexibly and dynamically. They conduct short research projects as well as more sustained research projects that require the synthesis of multiple complex sources to make informed decisions and solve problems. This includes the ability to draw evidence from several texts to support an analysis. It also includes the ability to gather and organize information, assess the credibility, accuracy, and usefulness of each source in answering the research question, noting any discrepancies among the data collected.

*Speaking and Listening****:*** Individuals ready to exit the High Adult Secondary level demonstrate flexibility, integrity, and initiative when collaborating as an effective member of a team. They are able to manage their time and other resources wisely in order to contribute to the team’s overarching goal(s) and meet the agreed upon deadlines. This includes the ability to exercise leadership, resolve conflicts as they arise, and pose and respond to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas. They are able to express alternative views clearly and persuasively, verify or challenge others’ ideas and conclusions, and think creatively and critically in light of the evidence and reasoning presented. Just as in writing, individuals are able to evaluate a speaker’s point of view, stance, premises, evidence, reasoning, rhetoric, and tone. They also are able to present their own findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, making strategic use of digital media Individuals adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Language:* Individuals ready to exit the High Adult Secondary level demonstrate strong control of English grammar, usage, and mechanics and use these elements to enhance the presentation of ideas both in speech and writing. This includes the use of parallel structure and the correct use of various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings. They are able to adapt their speech to a variety of contexts and tasks when indicated. The meaning of their written and oral communications is clear. Individuals are able to determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases as they are used in level-appropriate complex texts through context clues, knowledge of affixes and roots, and use of reference materials.

### Exhibit: Quantitative Analysis Chart for Determining Text Complexity[[10]](#footnote-10)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CCR Levels of Learning** | **ATOS** | **Degrees of Reading Power** | **Flesch-Kincaid** | **The Lexile Framework** | **Reading Maturity** |
| **B (Level 2)** | 2.75–5.14 | 42–54 | 1.98–5.34 | 420–820 | 3.53–6.13 |
| **C (Level 3)** | 4.97–7.03 | 52– 60 | 4.51–7.73 | 740–1010 | 5.42–7.92 |
| **D (Level 4)** | 7.00–9.98 | 57–67 | 6.51–10.34 | 925–1185 | 7.04–9.57 |
| **E (Level 5)** | 9.67–12.01 | 62–72 | 8.32–12.12 | 1050–1335 | 8.41–10.81 |
| **E (Level 6)** | 11.20–4.10 | 67–74 | 10.34–14.2 | 1185–1385 | 9.57–12.00 |

### MATHEMATICS

#### Introduction and Process

The EFL Descriptors for Mathematics also use the CCR as the foundation. They are intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. While these narrative descriptors address the most critical concepts for adult learners (as defined in the Major Work of the Level), there are additional concepts found in the CCR standards that support the major work for each level, and that are included in these descriptors. Lesson plans and assessment items for adult learners should be based on the full text of the CCR standards for each level, using these critical concepts as the foundation for lesson development and assessment.

The mathematics descriptors are divided into six educational functioning levels. The levels are ABE 1 (Beginning Literacy, corresponding to Level A of the CCR); ABE 2 (Beginning Basic, corresponding to Level B of the CCR); ABE 3 (Low Intermediate, corresponding to Level C of the CCR); ABE 4 (Middle Intermediate, corresponding to part of the Level D CCR), ABE 5 (High Intermediate, corresponding to the remainder of the Level D CCR); and ABE 6 (Adult Secondary, corresponding to Level E of the CCR). Each of the levels corresponds roughly to two grade levels, in K-12 terms, except for Level E, which combines the critical concepts of all of grades 9 through 12. Within each level the descriptors are further divided by domain:

* *The Mathematical Practices,*
* *Number Sense and Operations,*
* *Algebraic Thinking,*
* *Geometry (and Measurement), and*
* *Data Analysis (Statistics and Probability).*

The descriptors do not provide a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at any given level but provide examples of the most critical concepts and skills for the level to guide assessment and instruction. Assessment of the Mathematical Practice descriptors are best performed in the classroom using assessments that could be formative or summative and may be informal. It should be noted that mathematics placement decisions should take into account the reading level of the adult student. Verbally presented application problems at all mathematics levels require a minimum reading level.

### ABE Level 1: Beginning Literacy (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher a simple problem presented in a context and reason about and apply correct units to the results. They can visualize a situation using manipulatives or drawings and explain their processes and results using mathematical terms and symbols appropriate for the level. They recognize errors in the work and reasoning of others. They are able to strategically select and use appropriate tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, and/or manipulatives. They can see patterns and structure in sets of numbers and geometric shapes and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations*: Students prepared to exit this level have an understanding of whole number place value for tens and ones and are able to use their understanding of place value to compare two-digit numbers. They are able to add whole numbers within 100 and explain their reasoning, e.g., using concrete models or drawings and strategies based on place value and/or properties of operations. They are able to apply their knowledge of whole number addition and subtraction to represent and solve word problems that call for addition of three whole numbers whose sum is less than 20 by using such problem-solving tools as objects, drawings, and/or simple equations.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand and apply the properties of operations to addition and subtraction problems. They understand the relationship between the two operations and can determine the unknown number in addition or subtraction equations.

*Geometry and Measurement*: Students prepared to exit this level can analyze and compare 2­ dimensional and 3-dimensional shapes based on their attributes, such as their shape, size, orientation, the number of sides and/or vertices (angles), or the lengths of their sides. They can reason with two- dimensional shapes (e.g., quadrilaterals and half- and quarter-circles) and with three-dimensional shapes (e.g., right prisms, cones, and cylinders) to create composite shapes. They are able to measure the length of an object as a whole number of units, which are not necessarily standard units, for example measuring the length of a pencil using a paper clip as the length unit.

*Data Analysis*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to organize, represent, and interpret simple data sets (e.g., lists of numbers, shapes, or items) using up to three categories. They can answer basic questions related to the total number of data points in a set and the number of data points in each category, and can compare the number of data points in the different categories.

### ABE Level 2: Beginning Basic (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher two-step problems presented in a context, visualizing a situation using diagrams or sketches, and reasoning about and applying the correct units and the proper degree of precision to the results. They can explain their processes and results using mathematical terms and symbols appropriate for the level and recognize errors in the reasoning of others. They strategically select and use the appropriate tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, manipulatives, and/or calculators. They are able to see patterns and structure in sets of numbers, including in multiplication or addition tables, and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations*: Students prepared to exit this level understand place value for whole numbers to 1000 and can use that understanding to read, write, count, compare, and round three-digit whole numbers to the nearest 10 or 100. They are able to compute fluently with all four operations with whole numbers within 100. They use place value and properties of operations to explain why addition and subtraction strategies work, and can demonstrate an understanding of the inverse relationship between multiplication and division. They can solve one- and two-step word problems involving all four operations within 100 and identify and explain arithmetic patterns. They have an understanding of fractions, especially unit fractions, and can represent simple fractions on a number line. They understand and can explain equivalence of fractions, can recognize and generate simple equivalent fractions, and can compare two fractions with the same numerator or denominator by reasoning about their size.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level apply the properties of operations to multiplication and division of whole numbers. They understand the relationship between multiplication and division and can determine the unknown number in multiplication or division equations.

*Geometry and Measurement*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to reason about geometric shapes and their attributes. They can demonstrate an understanding that different shapes might share common attributes (e.g., four sides) and can compare and classify two-dimensional shapes, particularly quadrilaterals. They are able to partition shapes into parts with equal areas and express the area of each part as a unit fraction of the whole. They can use common U.S. Customary and metric units for linear measurements (e.g., inches, feet, centimeters, and meters) and solve problems involving measurement and estimation of intervals of time, liquid volumes, and masses of objects. They understand the concept of area and can relate it to addition and multiplication to solve real-world problems. They also understand, and can solve, real-world and mathematical problems involving perimeter of polygons.

*Data Analysis*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to draw and interpret simple graphs (e.g., bar graphs, picture graphs, and number line diagrams) including scaled bar and picture graphs. They can solve one- and two-step problems using scaled bar graphs. They can generate measurement data by measuring lengths to the nearest half- and quarter-inch and display that data by making a line plot marked off in appropriate units.

### ABE Level 3: Low Intermediate (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to decipher multi- step problems presented in a context and reason about and apply the correct units and the proper degree of precision to the results. They can visualize a situation using diagrams or sketches, see multiple strategies for solving a problem, explain their processes and results, and recognize errors in the work and reasoning of others. They can express themselves using mathematical terms and notation appropriate for the level and can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, and/or technology. They are able to see patterns and structure in sets of numbers and geometric shapes and use those insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations*: Students prepared to exit this level understand place value for both multi-digit whole numbers and decimals to thousandths, and use their understanding to read, write, compare, and round decimals. They are able to use their place value understanding and properties of operations to fluently perform operations with multi-digit whole numbers and decimals. They can find common factors, common multiples, and understand fraction concepts, including fraction equivalence and comparison. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide with fractions and mixed numbers. They are able to solve multi-step word problems posed with whole numbers and fractions, using the four operations. They also have an understanding of ratio concepts and can use ratio language to describe a relationship between two quantities, including the concept of a unit rate associated with a ratio.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to apply and extend their understanding of arithmetic to algebraic expressions, using a symbol to represent an unknown value. They can write, evaluate, and interpret expressions and equations, including expressions that arise from formulas used in real-world problems. They can solve real-world and mathematical problems by writing and solving simple one-variable equations and write a simple inequality that represents a constraint or condition in a real-world or mathematical problem. They can represent and analyze quantitative relationships between dependent and independent variables.

*Geometry and Measurement*: Students prepared to exit this level have a basic understanding of the coordinate plane and can plot points (i.e., ordered pairs) and place polygons in the coordinate plane to solve real-world and mathematical problems. They can classify two-dimensional shapes and use formulas to determine the area of two-dimensional shapes such as triangles and quadrilaterals.

They can determine the surface area of three-dimensional shapes composed of rectangles and triangles, and find the volume of right rectangular prisms. They are able to convert like measurement units within a given measurement system (e.g., convert 5 cm to 0.05 m) and use these conversions to solve multi-step, real-world problems. They are also able to solve measurement word problems (such as those that involve area, perimeter, distance, time intervals, liquid volumes, mass, and money) that involve simple fractions or decimals.

*Data Analysis and Statistics*: Students prepared to exit this level have a basic conceptual understanding of statistical variability, including such concepts as center, spread, and the overall shape of a distribution of data. They can present data using displays such as dot plots, histograms, and box plots.

### ABE Level 4: Middle Intermediate (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, determine an efficient strategy (from among multiple possible strategies) for solving a multi-step problem, and persevere in solving challenging problems. They can express themselves using the mathematical terms and notation appropriate to the level. They are able to defend their findings and critique the reasoning of others. They are accurate in their calculations and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as pencil/paper, measuring devices, calculators, and/or spreadsheets. They are able to see patterns and structure in number sets, data, expressions and equations, and geometric figures.

*Number Sense and Operations*: Students prepared to exit this level have an understanding of the rational number system, including how rational numbers can be represented on a number line and pairs of rational numbers can be represented on a coordinate plane. They can apply the concept of absolute value to find horizontal and vertical distances. They are able to apply the properties of integer exponents and evaluate, estimate, and compare simple square roots and cube roots.

Individuals at this level also understand ratio, rate, and percent concepts, as well as proportional relationships.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand the connections between proportional relationships, lines, and linear equations. They understand numerical and algebraic expressions, and equations and are able to use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems. They are able to analyze and solve linear equations and pairs of simultaneous linear equations.

Individuals at this level are able to define, interpret, and compare linear functions.

*Geometry*: Students prepared to exit this level can solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve angle measure, circumference, and area of 2-dimensional figures. They are able to solve problems involving scale drawings of 2-dimensional geometric figures. They understand the concepts of congruence and similarity with respect to 2-dimensional figures. They understand the Pythagorean theorem and can apply it to determine missing lengths in right triangles.

*Statistics and Probability*: Students prepared to exit this level can summarize and describe numerical data sets in relation to their context, including determining measures of center and variability and describing patterns and/or striking deviations from patterns. They understand and can apply the concept of chance, or probability. They are able to use scatter plots for bivariate measurement data to describe patterns of association between two quantities (such as clustering, outliers, positive or negative association, linear or non-linear association).

### ABE Level 5: High Intermediate (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, determine an efficient strategy (from among multiple possible strategies) for solving a multi-step problem, and persevere in solving challenging problems. They can reason quantitatively, including using units as a way to solve problems. They are able to defend their findings and critique the reasoning of others. They are accurate in their calculations and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools to aid in their work, such as graphing calculators, spreadsheets, and/or computer software. They are able to make generalizations based on patterns and structure they discover in number sets, data, expressions and equations, and geometric figures and use these insights to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations*: Students prepared to exit this level can reason about and solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve the four operations with rational numbers. They can apply the concept of absolute value to demonstrate on a number line their understanding of addition and subtraction with negative and positive rational numbers. Individuals at this level can apply ratio and percent concepts, including using rates and proportional relationships to solve multi- step real-world and mathematical problems.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level are able to use algebraic and graphical representations to solve real-world and mathematical problems, involving linear equations, inequalities, and pairs of simultaneous linear equations. Individuals at this level are able to use linear functions to describe, analyze, and model linear relationships between quantities.

*Geometry*: Students prepared to exit this level can solve real-world and mathematical problems that involve volume and surface area of 3-dimensional geometric figures. They can use informal arguments to establish facts about various angle relationships such as the relationships between angles created when parallel lines are cut by a transversal. They apply the Pythagorean Theorem to determine lengths in real-world contexts and distances in the coordinate plane.

*Statistics and Probability*: Students prepared to exit this level can use random sampling to draw inferences about a population and are able to draw informal comparative inferences about two populations using measures of center and measures of variability for numerical data from random samples. They can develop, use, and evaluate probability models. They are able to use scatter plots for bivariate measurement data to interpret patterns of association between two quantities (such as clustering, outliers, positive or negative association, linear or non-linear association) and a 2-way table to summarize and interpret bivariate categorical data.

### ABE Level 6: Adult Secondary (Math)

*The Mathematical Practices*: Students prepared to exit this level are able to think critically, make assumptions based on a situation, select an efficient strategy from multiple possible problem- solving strategies, plan a solution pathway, and make adjustments as needed when solving problems. They persevere in solving challenging problems, including considering analogous, simpler problems as a way to solving a more complex one. They can reason quantitatively, including through the use of units, and can express themselves using the precise definitions and mathematical terms and notation appropriate to the level. They are accurate in their calculations, use an appropriate level of precision in finding solutions and reporting results, and use estimation strategies to assess the reasonableness of their results. They are able to make conjectures, use logic to defend their conclusions, and can detect faulty thinking and errors caused by improper use of technology. They can create algebraic and geometric models and use them to answer questions, interpret data, make predictions, and solve problems. They can strategically select and use tools, such as measuring devices, calculators, spreadsheets, and/or computer software, to aid in their work. They are able to see patterns and structure in calculations, expressions, and equations and make connections to algebraic generalizations, which they use to work more efficiently.

*Number Sense and Operations:* Students prepared to exit this level have extended their number sense to include irrational numbers, radicals, and rational exponents and understand and use the set of real numbers. They are able to assess the reasonableness of calculation results based on the limitations of technology or given units and quantities and give results with the appropriate degree of precision.

*Algebraic Thinking:* Students prepared to exit this level understand the structure of expressions and can use that structure to rewrite linear, exponential, and quadratic expressions. They can add, subtract, and multiply polynomials that involve linear and/or quadratic expressions. They are also able to create linear equations and inequalities and quadratic and simple exponential equations to represent relationships between quantities and can represent constraints by linear equations or inequalities, or by systems of linear equations and/or inequalities. They can interpret the structure of polynomial and rational expressions and use that structure to identify ways to rewrite and operate accurately with them. They can add, subtract, and multiply polynomials that extend beyond quadratics. They are able to rearrange formulas to highlight a quantity of interest, for example rearranging Ohm’s law, V = IR, to highlight resistance R. They are also able to create equations and inequalities representing relationships between quantities, including those that extend beyond equations or inequalities arising from linear, quadratic, and simple exponential functions to include those arising from simple rational functions. They are able to use these equations/inequalities to solve problems both algebraically and graphically. They can solve linear equations and inequalities; systems of linear equations; quadratic, simple rational, and radical equations in one variable; and recognize how and when extraneous solutions may arise.

Students prepared to exit this level also have a basic understanding of functions, can use function notation properly, and use such notation to write a function describing a relationship between two quantities. They are able to evaluate functions for inputs in their domains and interpret linear, quadratic, and exponential functions that arise in applications in terms of the context. They are able to construct, graph, compare, and interpret functions (including, but not limited to, linear, quadratic, and exponential). They can sketch graphs given a verbal description of the relationship and identify and interpret key features of the graphs of functions that arise in applications in a context.

They are able to select or define a function that appropriately models a relationship and to compare properties of two functions each represented in a different way (algebraically, graphically, numerically in tables, or by verbal description).

*Geometry:* Students prepared to exit this level can solve problems involving similarity and congruence criteria for triangles and use volume formulas for cylinders, pyramids, cones, and spheres to solve problems. They can apply the concepts of density based on area and volume in modeling situations (e.g., persons per square mile, BTU’s per cubic foot).

*Data Analysis and Statistics*: Students prepared to exit this level can summarize, represent, and interpret data based on two categorical and quantitative variables, including by using frequency tables. They can compare data sets by looking at commonalities and differences in shape, center, and spread. They can recognize possible associations and trends in data, in particular in linear models, and distinguish between correlation and causation. They interpret one- and two-variable data, including those with linear and non-linear relationships. They interpret the slope (rate of change) and intercept (constant term) for a line of best fit and in the context of the data. They understand and account for extreme points of data in their analysis and interpret relative frequencies (joint, marginal and conditional).

## EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS (ESL)

These level descriptors that are to be used in 2019-20 are from the former Workforce Investment Act (WIA) because the WIOA ESL level descriptors do not have any approved assessments as of July 1, 2019.

| **Level and Test Scores** | ***Speaking and Listening*** | ***Reading and Writing*** | ***Functioning*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ESL 1: Beginning ESL Literacy** | 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. |
| **ESL 2: Low Beginning ESL** | 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. |
| **ESL 3: High Beginning ESL** | 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. |
| **ESL 4: Low Intermediate ESL** | 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). |
| **ESL 5: High Intermediate ESL** | 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. |
| **ESL 6: Advanced ESL** | 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 all other ABE policies and resources, can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE Policies Page](http://www.mnabe.org/abe-law-policy/mn-abe-policies) (http://www.mnabe.org/abe-law-policy/mn-abe-policies).

Resources for Minnesota ABE accountability and performance can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE Accountability and Reporting Page](http://www.mnabe.org/accountability-reporting) (http://www.mnabe.org/accountability-reporting).

Minnesota Assessment Training information can be found online at the [Southwest ABE Assessment Site](https://www.mnabeassessment.com/) (www.mnabeassessment.com).

Distance Learning resources can be found online at the [Minnesota ABE Distance Learning Web Site](http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org/) (http://www.mnabe-distancelearning.org/).

National Reporting System information can be found online on the [NRS Web site](http://www.nrsweb.org/) (www.nrsweb.org).  
  
If you have any questions about Minnesota ABE policies, performance or data, contact:

* Brad Hasskamp, (651) 582-8594 or [brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us](mailto:brad.hasskamp@state.mn.us)

or

* Todd Wagner, (651) 582-8466 or [todd.wagner@state.mn.us](mailto:todd.wagner@state.mn.us)

1. TABE = Tests of Adult Basic Education [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CASAS = Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. BEST = Basic English Skills Test [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These descriptors are included in the AEFLA information collection (OMB control number 1830-0027) and were implemented with Federal Register notice 82 FR 42339. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Refer to the Text Complexity Chart at the end of this document for the CCR standards for adult education for the appropriate range of complexity for this level. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This chart only identifies text complexity for levels B through E. At level A, students are just learning how to read, so it is not appropriate to focus on the complexity of the text until level B. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)