

Texas Adult Education and Literacy Assessment Guide

FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2020–2021



Note: A draft version of this Assessment Guide was sent via TWC Transmittal to AEL providers on April 25, 2019, and later submitted to OCTAE June 18, 2019, for review and approval as the PY 2019-2020 Assessment Guide. A subsequent version, as published here, was submitted to OCTAE in December 2019 as approval for the PY 2020–2021 Assessment Guide, and TWC later submitted this revised version to address remote testing and additional flexibilities provided by OCTAE due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This revised edition includes agency guidance on remote testing and waivers for PY'20-21 through reference to AEL Letter 03-20, issued July 7, 2020, and titled "Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy," and any subsequent issuances. Minor edits are made within the guide to make reference to this guidance.

On July 16, 2020, OCTAE notified TWC AEL that this assessment policy is approved for the period from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

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CONTACT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Texas Workforce Commission Adult Education and Literacy

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) contacts of general program information and technical support requests:

- Email AdultEducation@twc.state.tx.us for general AEL program information.
- Email AEFTA@twc.state.tx.us for all questions on this guide or other policy clarifications.
- Email teams.technicalassistance@twc.state.tx.us for questions related to data collection and the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS).
- Call the toll-free number for AEL at 1-855-594-0012 or the local number at 512-463-0540.

Texas Professional Development Center

The Texas professional development center for TWC AEL is the Texas Research-based Adult Instruction Network Professional Development (TRAIN PD) Consortium at the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL) at Texas A&M University.

Email TrainPD@tamu.edu or call 1-800-441-7323 toll-free.

Resources and Definitions

Following is a list of federal and TWC AEL policy and guidance for providers to reference for additional information related to AEL program requirements, performance and accountability, and more. TWC AEL will notify AEL providers of policy revisions and new policy issuances

published on the TWC Workforce Policy and Guidance page at <https://twc.texas.gov/agency/laws-rules-policy/workforce-policy-and-guidance>.

Primary Resources

The [Texas Adult Education and Literacy Guide](#) (AEL Guide) is one of several resources that AEL grantees, service providers, workforce partners, and other stakeholders can use to understand the structure, policies, procedures, and best practices in adult education. July 2017, <https://tcall.tamu.edu/docs/17-Texas-AEL-Guide-TWC.pdf>.

A list of [TWC Approved Assessment Trainings](#), which provides an overview of training opportunities and requirements for test supervisors and test administrators. <https://tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/TWCApprovedAssessmentTrainings.htm>.

The US Department of Education's (ED) [NRS \(National Reporting System\) Technical Assistance Guide for Performance Accountability](#) (NRS TA Guide, August 2019) provides guidance to states on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II performance accountability and augments Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) Program Memorandum 17-2. The NRS TA Guide describes the methodologies for collecting and reporting measures and for reporting tables for AEL: <https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Guide82019.pdf>.

[Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education Program Memorandum 17-2](#), issued December 19, 2016, revised August 23, 2017, and titled "Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs." OCTAE Program Memorandum 17-2 provides sub-regulatory guidance on the performance accountability requirements in WIOA §116 and associated WIOA regulations.¹ This guidance corresponds to the guidance provided in US Department of Labor (DOL) Training and Employment Guidance Letter 10-16, Change 1, which has the same title as the OCTAE memorandum; the only difference is that the unique cover letters written by ED and DOL affect the pagination,² <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-2.pdf>.

¹ Requirements related to the implementation and operation of the performance accountability system are described in WIOA §116, including implementing joint regulations in 20 CFR Part 677 (reprinted in 34 CFR Parts 361 and 463). The WIOA common reporting specifications were initially developed by the US Department of Labor (DOL) and the US Department of Education (ED), approved by the US Office of Management and Budget in June 2016, and revised in March 2018.

² The Texas AEL Assessment Guide (Assessment Guide) references only OCTAE Program Memorandum 17-2, "Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs," revised August 23, 2017.

[OCTAE Program Memorandum 19-1](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-19-1.pdf), issued December 19, 2018, and titled “Guidance for Validating Jointly Required Performance Data Submitted under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA),”

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-19-1.pdf>.

[OCTAE Program Memorandum 20-3](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-20-3.pdf), issued March 27, 2020, and titled “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions,”

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-20-3.pdf>

[OCTAE Program Memorandum 20-4](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-pm-20-4-covid-faqs-final.pdf), issued March 27, 2020, and titled “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions, Part 2,”

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-pm-20-4-covid-faqs-final.pdf>

[OCTAE Program Memorandum 20-5](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-pm-20-5-covid-faqs-final.pdf), issued May 29, 2020, and titled “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions, Part 3,”

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-pm-20-5-covid-faqs-final.pdf>

Other Resources

US Departments of Labor and Education, WIOA common performance reporting specifications initially approved by the US Office of Management and Budget in June 2016 and revised in March 2018. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number 1205-0526, <https://www.doleta.gov/performance/reporting/>.

WD Letter 13-08, issued April 1, 2008, and titled “Security of Personal Identity Data,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/wd-13-08-twc.pdf.

AEL Letter 02-16, Change 1, issued October 13, 2016, and titled “Implementing the Integrated Education and Training Service Approach—*Update*,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael02-16ch1.pdf.

AEL Letter 02-17, issued April 3, 2017, and titled “Assessing English Language Learners in the Adult Education and Literacy Program,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael02-17.pdf.

AEL Letter 07-17, issued December 13, 2017, and titled “Required Syllabus Design for Adult Education and Literacy Instruction,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael07-17.pdf.

AEL 07-18, issued October 9, 2018, and titled “Suitable Tests for Use in AEL,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael07-18.pdf.

AEL Letter 01-19, issued January 29, 2019, and titled “Periods of Participation for Adult Education and Literacy,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael01-19.pdf.

WD Letter 02-18, issued March 23, 2018, and titled “Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information and Other Sensitive Information,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael02-18.pdf.

WD Letter 17-07, Change 1, issued January 26, 2018, and titled “Storage and Use of Disability-Related and Medical Information—*Update*,” and any subsequent issuances, https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/wd-17-07ch1-twc.pdf.

AEL Letter 03-20, issued July 7, 2020, and titled “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy,” and any subsequent issuances, https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael-03-20-remote-testing-twc.pdf.

Definitions

“Assessment” is used to describe the process of collecting information that relies on multiple qualitative and quantitative measures and standardized tests.

“Baseline” is now used to describe the use of tests in the calculation of performance. “Progress test” is no longer used. Tests are either “pretests” or “posttests.”

“Content area” is used to describe the various content areas of tests.

“Domain” is no longer used and was a holdover from “domain of significance,” which is no longer part of performance calculation.

“Providers” refers to grant recipients, subrecipients, and any provider providing AEL services funded by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) .

“Students” are described as “individuals,” “participants,” or “customers,” depending on where they are in the eligibility process.

Other terms and definitions can be found at the following link:

<https://tcall.tamu.edu/AELDefinitions.html>.

Significant Changes Found in the Revised AEL Assessment Guide

WIOA greatly expands performance options to match allowable AEL activities. WIOA performance measures support targeted measurement of college readiness and transition to postsecondary education or training as well as customized employer-based services.

Because of these enhancements, the Program Year 2019–2020 (PY’19–’20) AEL Assessment Guide (Assessment Guide) was significantly revised from the PY’18–’19 Assessment Guide, and those revisions are reflected in this Program Year 2020-2021 (PY’20–’21) version. TWC limited

the scope of the revision to only those elements of performance accountability required by the US Department of Education (ED) for inclusion in the guide, largely related to eligibility testing and the Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG.³ The entire performance accountability framework required under WIOA—the remaining MSGs and the credential and employment exit-based measures—is described in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide. The AEL Guide is referenced throughout the Assessment Guide to direct providers to more information on measures, intake, orientation, comprehensive assessment, and more.

[Appendix A](#) lists the significant revisions to the previous Assessment Guide.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM YEAR 2020–2021 AEL ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the need for the AEL Assessment Guide, the guide’s intended audience, performance options and flexibility under WIOA, and the Assessment Guide’s relationship to an AEL program’s performance—specifically the Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a)—and how providers must document attainment of the Type 1a MSG.

What Is the Guide and Why Is It Required?

A comprehensive performance accountability system is required of AEL grantees under WIOA⁴ and TWC Adult Education and Literacy rules at 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §805.4. The Assessment Guide standardizes the process of determining participant placement, measuring progress toward outcomes, and collecting and reporting data based on the NRS Technical Assistance (TA) Guide, published December 2017, as well as on TWC AEL Letters and Workforce Development (WD) Letters where noted.

Federal and State Policy and Guidance

DOL and ED provide states guidance on the implementation of WIOA performance accountability measures (also referred to as indicators) and reporting requirements to support implementation of the WIOA §116 performance accountability requirements and associated

³ The State Assessment Policy Guidance requirements can be found on the NRS website at <https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/AsmtPolicyGdlns081318-508.docx>.

⁴ 34 CFR 462 Subpart D.

regulations.⁵ TWC AEL applies federal guidance through this Assessment Guide and associated AEL Letters and WD Letters to support effective AEL provider measurement and reporting to help program participants achieve positive workforce and educational results. For further information, see the [Brief Overview of WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance](#) section as well as the related guidance listed under the [Resources and Definitions](#) section.

Who Is the Guide’s Audience?

TWC AEL grantees and their service providers funded under TWC Request for Proposals (RFP) 320-18-01 must comply with the guidance outlined in the Assessment Guide. Additionally, grantees funded under other AEL special initiative solicitations, such as Accelerate Texas or Ability to Benefit, may be directed to use all or portions of the Assessment Guide to direct assessment and testing processes.

Special initiative grantees may also be required to use additional reporting guidance to meet the grant reporting requirements, which will be provided to these grantees either within the specific RFP, or through guidance delivered during project implementation.

Why Does Texas Need an Assessment Guide?

Assessment and testing are essential components of exemplary service delivery to support participant success. The Assessment Guide provides a resource for performance accountability staff, teachers, testing supervisors, data entry staff, and other administrators on testing, assessment, and local reporting requirements. A proper understanding of this guide forms the foundation for measuring effective education, training, and employment strategies.

Uniform implementation of performance reporting and the proper administration of the valid and reliable tests approved in the Assessment Guide support state reporting within the common performance accountability framework of WIOA.

Uniform Implementation

The requirements in this guide provide a detailed explanation of the state and local program responsibilities for participant assessment and testing specific under NRS, other WIOA guidance, and state requirements.

Providers must adhere to uniform implementation of the requirements in the Assessment Guide to deliver fair and equitable access to services for participants, manage performance, and identify the areas for program improvement. While providers are required to follow test

⁵ TEGL 10-16, Change 1, “Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs,” https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=3255 and the NRS TA Guide provide guidance on performance indicators, https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS_TA_Guide.pdf.

publisher’s guidelines specific to test administration, they also must adhere to requirements outlined in this guide; for example, TWC requires specific test supervisor and administrator training through TWC-approved trainings. Additionally, while this guide includes information on test publisher’s minimum hours for posttesting, hours may be updated by publishers, and TWC will notify providers of such changes.

Consistent implementation of the assessment procedures and practices outlined in this guide provide the basis for reporting state and federal performance as well as for comparison of provider efforts and is monitored by TWC. Deviance from the requirements and procedures outlined in the Assessment Guide may result in compliance findings and corrective action.

Defining Validity and Reliability

Test data must meet validity and reliability standards to accurately measure participant performance. Data quality begins at the provider level through implementation of the requirements outlined in this guide, guidance from test publishers, and other TWC AEL policy. Test validity means the accuracy of a test’s measurement—that is, the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. Test reliability means the degree of consistency shown in performance on the test, or the extent to which an individual can be expected to perform similarly across multiple administrations of a test or when tested under different conditions.⁶

Test data is useful only if the information is valid and reliable and is collected and reported consistently across providers. To ensure validity, only the tests approved in this guide are allowed for Title II WIOA—eligibility and performance purposes. For reliability, test publishers’ guidance must be followed, and administration must be consistent. Providers’ adherence to the Assessment Guide and all administration policies for approved tests is monitored by TWC’s Subrecipient Monitoring (SRM) department, including, but not limited to, matching assessment data with supporting documentation in participant files. See the [Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities](#) section.

New Performance Options under WIOA

Expanded Options and Increased Need for Oversight

WIOA greatly expands performance measurement options and methods to match available AEL activities. MSG and credential options, briefly described in the following section and further outlined in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide, support multiple methods to measure basic education attainment beyond a pretest and posttest, measurement of postsecondary education or training, customized employer-based services, and employment and earnings performance. While the expansion allowed under

⁶ See the NRS TA Guide for more information on test validity and reliability.

WIOA allows providers greater flexibility in achieving performance outcomes, it has also increased the complexity of performance management.

Brief Overview of WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance

WIOA supports the alignment of performance-related definitions and measures, thereby facilitating comparable data collection and integrated reporting across the six core WIOA programs and program-specific requirements. The six core programs are the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, authorized under WIOA Title I and administered by DOL; the AEFLA-funded program, authorized under WIOA Title II and administered by ED; the Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by WIOA Title III and administered by DOL; and the Vocational Rehabilitation program, authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA Title IV and administered by ED.

A summary of each performance measure is located in Table 1: WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance. Further detail on each measure, as well as the associated methodologies for performance calculation, can be found in OCTAE Program Memo 17-2.

Table 1: WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance

Indicator	Summary
Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs)	<p>Measures of the documented progress (academic, technical, occupational, or other) that a participant makes during participation toward obtaining basic education, a credential, or employment-related performance.</p> <p>Texas has defined MSG within two broad categories: those designed primarily to measure basic education activities and those designed primarily to measure workforce training in Integrated Education and Training (IET).</p> <p>Basic Education MSGs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EFL MSG (Type 1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a) ○ Postsecondary Enrollment MSG (Type 1b⁷)

⁷ Type 1b in OCTAE Program Memorandum 17-2 is listed as Type 1c. TWC uses Type 1b to avoid a confusing skip from Type 1a to Type 1c. OCTAE’s Type 1b MSG (awarding high school credits or Carnegie units) applies to states that implement adult high schools and does not apply in Texas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HSE Achievement MSG (Type 2) <p>Workforce Training in IET MSGs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Postsecondary Transcript or Report Card in IET MSG (Type 3) ● Progress Milestone in IET MSG (Type 4) ● Skills Progression in IET MSG (Type 5)
Employment-Related Indicators	Measures employment and earnings for participants during the second and fourth quarters after exit from the program.
Credential Attainment Indicator	<p>A measure of postsecondary and high school equivalency (HSE) credential attainment that a participant makes during participation or one year after exit. Note that for an HSE credential to count in the numerator of this measure, the participant must be either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enrolled in PSE within 365 days after the Date of Exit; or ● employed in one or more of the four calendar quarters after the quarter that contains the Date of Exit.
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	<p>Measures being piloted by TWC to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retention with the same employer ● Repeat business customers ● Employer penetration rate

A Strong Local Model

The multifaceted performance accountability system under WIOA requires a strong local AEL service delivery model to ensure both strong performance and compliance, and requires the active participation of most, if not all, local provider staff members at some level. Performance accountability staff required under the AEL statewide grant plays a critical role in supporting implementation of the local reporting system.

Instructors, lead instructors, and career navigators who have the most contact with participants must play a more active role in performance management. It is important that these staff members clearly understand which performance options are most appropriate to measure activities related to a participant’s goals and programs of study so that they can plan and

monitor services and performance accordingly. Additionally, it is important that participants be aware of the program’s plan for measuring their accomplishments.

Increased Oversight

Expanded options and flexibility increase the need for compliance oversight. Varied points for data collection, including supplemental data collection and some data collection that is relatively new to historical adult education practices, have increased the need for programs to reexamine traditional staffing and data management models to ensure increased performance. Programs are now required to have specific performance accountability and quality assurance staff to provide effective follow-up services and ensure data collection for exit-based measures. Further guidance on post-exit follow-up may be found in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide.

MSG Performance at the State Level

TWC’s Chapter 800 General Administration rule §800.68 authorizes TWC, the agency that administers Texas AEL, to outline the performance benchmarks that AEL programs must achieve to access up to 10 percent of their allocated funding—this is known as performance-based funding. MSG achievement has historically been included as one of the benchmarks to measure a program’s access to performance-based funding, although TWC has flexibility in determining the benchmarks each program year.

Additionally, Texas AEL has set statewide MSG targets, based on the 12 educational functioning levels (EFLs), which are customized for each AEL program and based on a blended model.

THE TEXAS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT MODEL

Criteria for Achieving MSG Type 1a

- **Achievement in any Content Area Flexibility:** Achieving a level gain through the Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a) can take place in any content area, not just the area with the lowest score, historically known as the domain of significance, or DOS.

While the domain of significance is no longer the only measurement of pretest-posttest gains, it is still used to categorize participants for reporting purposes and is referred to as a content area.

- **Flexibility in Selecting Testing Competencies:** Numeracy descriptors are allowed for English language learner participants, and speaking and listening tests are allowed for native English speaker participants if the participant’s needs and the program’s instruction warrant such an approach. See the [Individuals to be Assessed](#) section.

High ASE Participants: Participants who score into High ASE cannot show a gain through an MSG Type 1a and can only earn MSG performance through Postsecondary Enrollment MSG (Type 1b) or HSE Achievement MSG (Type 2). Procedures for these MSGs are described in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide.

IET Participants: For IET participants, testing might only be in the content area identified as most critical for the participant to succeed in workforce training, as documented on the syllabus' common learning objectives.

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the comprehensive assessment model used to determine the most suitable services for a participant, including determination of the Planned MSG.

Comprehensive assessment captures information that providers use to determine accountability requirements, including participant eligibility, placement, and progress. Comprehensive assessment data also help improve service delivery response and can help educators customize learning activities to best meet the participants' personal, employment, and postsecondary education or training objectives. Comprehensive assessment is also an indispensable resource for program improvement.

Assessment—Not Just Testing

Adults return to education with a wide variety of skills gained from prior education, training, work, and life experience that provide an important foundation for educators. Comprehensive assessment refers to a large, inclusive process of collecting valuable information that relies on multiple measures, both qualitative (for example, interviews and questionnaires) and quantitative (for example, standardized tests).

Comprehensive assessment, as required under the AEL statewide grant, and described in greater detail in the AEL Guide, helps providers accurately capture the assets that customers bring with them when they return to education while also capturing the information required for program reporting and eligibility.

The terms *test* and *testing* are often used interchangeably with the words *assessment* and *assessing*. While standardized tests like the TABE® are typically composed of questions or tasks designed to measure specific academic achievement, they are weak in or incapable of capturing the full range of knowledge, skills, and abilities adults bring when they return to education; thus, standardized testing is only one element of a quality comprehensive assessment model that supports participant success.

Testing and comprehensive assessment information should inform and direct a variety of service delivery and program improvement strategies, including the following.

Appropriate Placement and Referral. Assessment should support a provider's ability to:

- inform participants about their current basic academic abilities;
- guide program placement into the most appropriate instructional programs and activities, such as IET and Integrated Education and Training English Literacy and Civics Education (Integrated EL Civics);
- identify individuals who may have learning needs and who would benefit from referral to Vocational Rehabilitation services or other organizations for additional assessment;
- direct program referral for individuals who would benefit from other services, such as support services or college advising;
- forecast and document the Planned MSG that best aligns with the participant’s initial goals and program of study; and
- help participants determine short- and long-term goals.

Effective Instruction. Assessment should support an instructor’s ability to:

- diagnose basic education gaps to guide instruction;
- align instruction within the AEL content standards; and
- document progress and certify level completion.

Program Planning. Assessment should support a provider’s ability to:

- identify areas of program improvement and planning;
- plan and develop professional development activities;
- monitor instructor effectiveness;
- calibrate administrator effectiveness;
- communicate performance results to various constituencies; and
- compare performance to other providers.

Program Eligibility versus Program Suitability

While an individual may be eligible for AEL services, it is important for program staff to consider the suitability of the individual for particular services. Determining suitability includes assessing a participant’s ability to successfully participate and persist in the program based on the participant’s goals, past experience in work or school, and any external barriers.

Implementation of Comprehensive Assessment

The comprehensive assessment process should be delivered in an asset-focused and accommodating climate that helps providers build rapport and strong communication with individuals who are returning to education and seeking employment.

The process must include an opportunity for individuals to self-identify a given physical, mental, or emotional disability and requested accommodations. See the [Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities or Other Special Needs](#) section.

At a minimum, providers must implement, through standard operating procedures (SOPs), the following elements of a comprehensive assessment process during intake and orientation.

- **Completion of Eligibility Requirements.** This includes both of the following:
 - **Testing** for new and returning individuals or participants, as described in the [Testing Considerations](#) section, to determine eligibility, if necessary, and placement for AEL services based on basic educational need
- **Collection of required data elements.** This facilitates the documenting of age eligibility and other information, as described in the Intake, Eligibility, and Orientation section, including collection of the individual’s Social Security number (SSN) or reason for nondisclosure of SSN, as described in AEL Letter 02-19, “Collection of Certain Participant Information for Performance Reporting,” and subsequent issuances, and forthcoming AEL guidance on required data elements for AEL enrollment.
- **Collection of Qualitative Information.** This is facilitated through individual interviews or questionnaires to capture personal and academic needs, included disability-related needs. The process also helps providers learn the assets that individuals bring with them from life and work experiences.
- **Goal-setting.** It is essential to document goals for instruction and other services that will serve as the foundation for AEL services. Participant goals are the foundation of the Individual Training, Education, and Career Plan (ITEC Plan) described in the AEL Guide. Participant goals must be revisited and updated regularly.

It is during comprehensive assessment that providers align the goals and needs of the participants to a specific program of study through the development of the ITEC Plan, which is further outlined in the AEL Guide.

Identifying the Planned MSG

During comprehensive assessment, providers can align appropriate criteria to measure progress and outcomes, including forecasting a Planned MSG. The Planned MSG is the MSG identified during a participant’s initial comprehensive assessment and forecast to be the MSG most likely to allow the individual to make performance gains. The forecast is based on the participant’s level at intake, initial objectives, goals, and the program of study selected during enrollment. During comprehensive assessment, a provider can determine which MSG is appropriate based on the student’s goals and objectives.

Because not all aspects of a participant’s success can be forecast and a participant’s program objectives may change, the Planned MSG may change.

Measurable Skill Gains

MSGs are measures of documented progress that a participant makes toward obtaining basic education, an HSE, postsecondary education, or training credential or toward reaching employment-related performance indicators.

This section describes requirements for a participant to earn the Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a). Information on requirements related to the other types of MSGs as well as credential attainment, employment, and earnings measures are further detailed in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide.

Pretest-Posttest MSG, Type 1a

The Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a) is a comparison of a participant's initial EFL, as measured by a pretest, with the participant's EFL, as measured by a posttest. A test given to a participant after the pretest is considered a posttest. Posttests must correspond to the alternate form listed for that test or to the required minimum hours if using the same form and must be given after the required minimum number of instructional hours, as described in the test publisher's guidelines, unless a justification is provided. For example, if a participant has a pretest using the BEST Plus 2.0, then only the administration of a BEST Plus 2.0 test with an alternate form will count as a posttest.

The MSG is earned when a participant's skills progress to a next higher EFL in any of the content areas measured by the test. Once a gain is earned, it cannot be unearned by further testing.

Providers must be aware of the following pretesting and posttesting requirements and options for attainment of the Type 1a MSG:

Documentation of MSG Type 1a and Its Importance

Providers must document the Achievement of a Pretest-Posttest MSG in TEAMS as a test and must maintain the appropriate documentation in the participant's file. Documentation for the Type 1a MSG, such as the original test answer sheet; test booklet cover page that has the participant's name, date, and test ID; and a scantron or online printout of scores must be maintained in the participant file and entered into TEAMS by the 15th of the month in which the MSG is earned for data validation. See the Monitoring Surrounding Testing section.

For MSGs other than Type 1a, documentation must be collected within 30 days of achievement of the MSG. MSGs must not be entered into TEAMS until documentation is collected and stored in the participant's file. For guidance on how to document other MSGs, programs should refer to AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide.

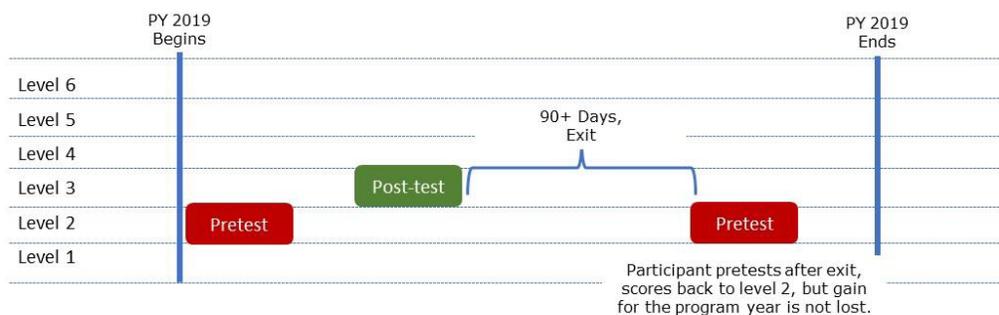
Gains, Timely Testing Requirements, and Test Validity

Providers must be aware of the following changes, effective **July 1, 2019**, implemented to support increased MSGs.

A Gain Is a Gain

Providers must be aware that once a participant makes a gain on a posttest, it can never be lost, or “ungained.” For example, if a participant has a pretest in August and makes a gain to the next level on a posttest in December, the participant has attained a Type 1a MSG. If the participant then takes another posttest in March but remains at the same level or does not achieve a gain, he or she will not lose the initial Type 1a MSG performance, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Gain Is a Gain



Similarly, participants who earn performance through a Postsecondary Enrollment MSG (Type 1b) or HSE Achievement MSG (Type 2), have earned MSG performance. The positive performance is not lost if the participant does not complete posttesting or show achievement on a posttest.

Participation Rate and Posttest Rate

Overall, data over the last few years shows that participants who posttest make gains. In 2018–2019, 84 percent of participants with a posttest made a gain.

In PY'19–'20, TWC introduced a participation rate measure and a posttest rate measure, both effective July 1, 2019. Although providers were not required to meet these rates beginning July 1, 2019, providers must be aware that TWC may implement a future requirement for programs to meet these rate measures and/or may include these measures as part of performance-based funding criteria. TWC will notify programs of any requirements in an AEL Letter or other guidance.

Participation Rate Measure

The participation rate measure is the percentage of overall participants who reach enough hours to take a posttest. The measure is calculated by the unique hour requirements of each test, based on the test publisher's guidelines.

- The 2020-2021 Participation Rate is to be determined.

Posttest Rate Measure

The posttest rate measure is the percentage of participants who have obtained the minimum hours to test who take a posttest. The measure is calculated by the unique hour requirements of each test, based on the test publisher's guidelines.

- The 2020-2021 Posttest Rate is 65%.

Providers must follow the test publisher's guidelines when posttesting participants in order to monitor the participant's progress and evaluate the program's instructional impact.

Posttests must be given one calendar day after the participant reaches the appropriate number of instructional hours, as outlined by the test publisher's guidelines.

Grant Requirements Related to Testing and Assessment

Providers must comply with the requirements stipulated in grants awarded under the AEL statewide grant, which include requirements related to assessment and testing. This compliance includes, but is not limited to, the testing and placement of a participant in accordance with the following:

- Requirements of this Assessment Guide
- Participant's testing results for placement in or referral to the most appropriate programs or services to address the participant's immediate needs and goals
- Criteria for identifying individuals who may have learning needs and benefit from referral to Vocational Rehabilitation services, or other organizations, for additional cognitive testing and assessment

Standard Operating Procedures

Providers are required to develop SOPs related to comprehensive assessment, testing, and placement, which must include the Planned MSG, as well as an SOP on customer profile data collection, personally identifiable information, and data management.

The comprehensive assessment, testing, and placement SOP must describe in sufficient detail a process for measuring participant progress and outcomes that best align with the participant's goals and program. The SOP must:

- identify the program staff members who make the planned designation;
- explain how participants, instructors, and other relevant staff members are informed about a participant's MSG status;

- explain the process for selecting an MSG type, based on a participant’s performance, goals, objectives, or participation; and
- explain how plans for determining the best MSG type are modified when a participant’s performance, goals, objectives, and/or participation change.

Additionally, the SOP must explain how documentation is collected, when it is collected, and by whom the appropriate documentation is collected so that the MSG can be entered into TEAMS. See the Data Collection and Entry Requirements section.

INDIVIDUALS TO BE ASSESSED

Introduction

The requirements in the Assessment Guide pertain to the testing of all individuals to determine basic education eligibility. Eligible individuals as defined under AEFLA include individuals who are basic skills deficient, individuals who are English language learners, and individuals without a high school diploma or its equivalent.

The general term *customer* refers to anyone accessing AEL services. All customers have a status as either a *reportable individual* (or just *individual*) or a *participant*.

An *individual* is a customer who has taken action to begin AEL services but has not yet been determined eligible for AEL services either because he or she lacks a pretest to determine basic education eligibility or has not completed 12 direct contact hours.

A *participant* is an individual who has been determined eligible and has entered a period of participation (POP) by earning 12 direct contact hours. A participant whose POP crosses into a new program year will count as a participant in the new program year only after he or she receives one direct contact hour in the new program year.

Testing Considerations

Providers must be aware that the need for testing at intake can be influenced by the customer's status in the program. Some customers may be completely new to AEL, with no previous record in an AEL program and no existing participant or testing information. Others may be continuing without a break across a program year or be returning to services after exit and have some evidence of previous participation, such as test scores in TEAMS.

Providers must also be aware that customers may engage in AEL services with the same provider or different providers in the local workforce development area or across the state, and any information in TEAMS on that participant will follow the customer to another provider. This information can be valuable in determining the participant's next steps in service, as well as testing requirements, hours within a POP, performance calculations, and data collection requirements.

Providers are federally required to measure the educational gain of all participants receiving 12 or more hours of instruction with an NRS-approved test, as outlined in this guide. Unless a participant has earned either a Postsecondary Enrollment MSG (Type 1b) or an HSE Achievement MSG (Type 2), providers are required to posttest participants in a timely manner, as set forth in the [Gains, Timely Testing Requirements, and Test Validity](#) section.

Pretest Requirement to Determine Basic Skills Deficiency

The following customers must be pretested before enrollment in AEL services:

- Individuals new to AEL
- Individuals who have exited and returned to AEL services
- Participants who are continuing services across a program year, have not exited, and whose last test score is 150 or more calendar days old

For more information on testing requirements, see the [Testing Requirements and New Flexibility](#) section.

Individuals are eligible for AEL services if they:

- are **basic skills deficient**, meaning they function at less than a secondary school completion level;
- **lack a secondary school credential**, such as a diploma or high school equivalency; or
- are an **English language learner**.

A test score determines if the individual is basic skills deficient or an English language learner, although an English language learner may be tested in any approved test. See the [Pretests for English Language Learners](#) section.

For individuals who are new or who have exited, the first test in the test sequence that determines eligibility must be given before the first contact hour.

The pretest forms the basis for:

- **basic education eligibility**, based on a need for reading, writing, mathematics, or English proficiency, established through a score on a Texas-approved standardized test within the range of literacy-related tasks specific to the content areas of the NRS functioning level tables (see the NRS Test Benchmarks and EFL Indicators section);
- a **baseline pretest score** to assess Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a); and
- **accurate placement** in AEL services.

Individuals Who Lack a Secondary School Credential

Because the lack of a secondary school credential is a basis for program eligibility, it is possible that an individual will test beyond the range of **Level 6 High ASE** but still be eligible for services. These individuals can show positive MSG performance by earning either a Postsecondary Enrollment MSG or a HSE Achievement MSG.

Initial EFL Placement

CFR §462.42 requires that students be placed at an appropriate EFL based on the scores of an NRS pretest. AEL providers are required to test individuals in all content areas, and an individual will be placed at an EFL for the program year based on one of the following:

- The lowest test score, if all content area tests are taken on the same day
- The earliest test score available, given new flexibilities to stagger tests in different content areas

For example, an individual tested with the TABE 11/12, with all content area tests taken on the same day, may score at an ABE Level 3 in reading and an ABE Level 2 in math. In this scenario, the individual would be placed at an EFL Level 2 (the lower of the two). However, the AEL provider may provide instruction in the area most relevant to the individual's needs, such as reading.

Pretests for English Language Learners

English language learners (ELLs) are individuals who have limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending English and whose native language is a language other than English, or individuals who live in a family or community where a language other than English is dominant.

AEL grantees must establish whether a participant is an ELL and must document that demographic characteristic on the participant enrollment form and in the participant profile in TEAMS.

For individuals identified as ELLs in TEAMS participant profiles, AEL grantees must use the comprehensive assessment to determine the most appropriate test to administer based on the individual's English language proficiency and goals.

If the AEL provider determines through comprehensive assessment that the ELL may test out of the score range of state-approved ESL tests, as outlined in [Tests Permitted for Use in Texas](#), the AEL grantee must document in the participant's file how English proficiency was determined.

Examples of the facts on which a determination of proficiency is based include the following:

- The participant tested out of range on a state-approved ESL test.
- The participant completed an alternate ESL test, including a locally developed assessment, that verified sufficient English proficiency for the participant to meet his or her goals.

If the provider has made and documented a determination of English proficiency in the participant's file, the provider may use any test approved in this guide as the pretest for ELLs, including tests approved for ABE or ASE levels. ABE- or ASE-approved tests may also be used for posttesting under an Achievement on a Pretest-Posttest MSG (Type 1a). The participant will be considered an ABE or ASE participant in the NRS and must make appropriate gains on an NRS-approved test or must earn one of the other MSGs.

Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities or Other Special Needs

Participants with documented disabilities will be granted reasonable accommodations upon request during testing and any program services.

During program intake and comprehensive assessment, providers must ensure that participants have the opportunity to identify needs, including, but not limited to, identified or suspected disabilities, that may require additional testing supports and review. If applicable, support must be provided to ensure that participants with disabilities have an equal opportunity to benefit from services.

“Documented disabilities” means that the individual can present a formal document provided by a qualified professional (physician, educational counselor, psychologist, special education teacher, or a rehabilitation counselor), such as a doctor’s report, a diagnostic test, or other formal record of disability that includes the following:

- Diagnosis of the disability, whether physical or cognitive
- Evaluation of the educational implications of the diagnosis and the impact of the disability on areas of functioning
- Recommendations for the specific strategies and accommodations in education, reasonable and necessary as provided by laws and regulations protecting individuals with disabilities, required by the disability

Accommodations provided for testing should be the same accommodations used during instruction.

Test administrators must follow accommodations guidance provided by the test publisher, as indicated in each test administration manual from the publisher.

The Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) has made available large print, Braille, and audio CDs of each paper-based test form and level, as well as text-to-speech functionality for computer-based tests, for individuals who may need accommodations. Magnified screens and adjustable screen color options are also available for individuals taking computer-based tests. Additional test administration staff may be required when providing accommodations. DRC provides guidance on administering tests with accommodations in *TABE Guidelines to Inclusive Accommodations*, available at

https://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_Guidelines_to_Inclusive_Testing_2017.pdf.

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) describes the following as ways to accommodate learners with disabilities when administering a test: allowing extra testing time, using a different room, allowing for frequent breaks, providing an interpreter, and other accommodations found in the test administration manual for each CASAS test. More guidelines

on CASAS accommodations are available at <https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/testing-guidelines/accommodations-guidelines>.

The Center of Applied Linguistics (CAL) outlines accommodations for the BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy tests that include, but are not limited to, using rulers, color overlays, and/or glasses. Accommodations that may alter the results of a test are not allowed. Regarding the BEST Plus 2.0, CAL states that “BEST Plus 2.0 is not appropriate for use with individuals whose visual impairment prevents them from seeing the picture cue prompts even when enlarged or otherwise enhanced.” Similarly, BEST Literacy guidelines state that it “is not an appropriate accommodation for someone to read the test questions to an examinee with sight impairment, as BEST Literacy is a test of reading, not listening.” Further information on accommodations for the BEST tests is available at <http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/Frequently-Asked-Questions-CAL-Adult-ESL-Assessments.pdf>.

CONTENT TESTING REQUIREMENTS AND NEW FLEXIBILITIES

Introduction

In some areas of the state, Texas AEL’s performance on educational outcomes has lagged as providers worked on redesigning systems and expanding local service delivery to increase postsecondary education or training and employment objectives. To support continued growth in MSG attainment, specifically in posttest gains, Texas providers have new flexibility aimed at easing test administration burden and facilitating timely posttesting.

Program Year 2020–2021 Flexibilities & Waivers

On May 29, 2020, because of circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted AEL service delivery, OCTAE issued [Program Memorandum 20-5](#), titled “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions, Part 3,” which provided states the option to allow providers unable to administer an NRS-approved test to an individual to enroll an individual without administering an NRS-approved pre-test. Texas AEL providers implementing this flexibility must develop procedures to determine eligibility and provisional educational functioning levels (EFLs) for students participating remotely without an approved NRS test, as outlined in policy found in AEL Letter 03-20, “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy.”

AEL providers may also find information on waivers for Program Year 2020-2021 in AEL Letter 03-20– and any subsequent issuances.

150 Calendar-Day Test Validity (Unless Waived)

Providers must be aware that all tests administered after July 1, 2020, are valid for no more than 150 calendar days when pulling a test score as a baseline into a new program year unless a waiver for this has been provided by TWC AEL staff. Under this provision, AEL providers must be

aware of the requirements outlined in the Testing Requirements, Recommendations, and Flexibility section below.

Testing Requirements, Recommendations, and Flexibility

Providers must test the following customers before enrollment in AEL services, as outlined in the Individuals to be Assessed Section:

- Individuals new to AEL
- Individuals who have exited and returned to AEL services
- Participants who are continuing services across a program year and who have not exited, but whose last test score is 150 or more calendar days old

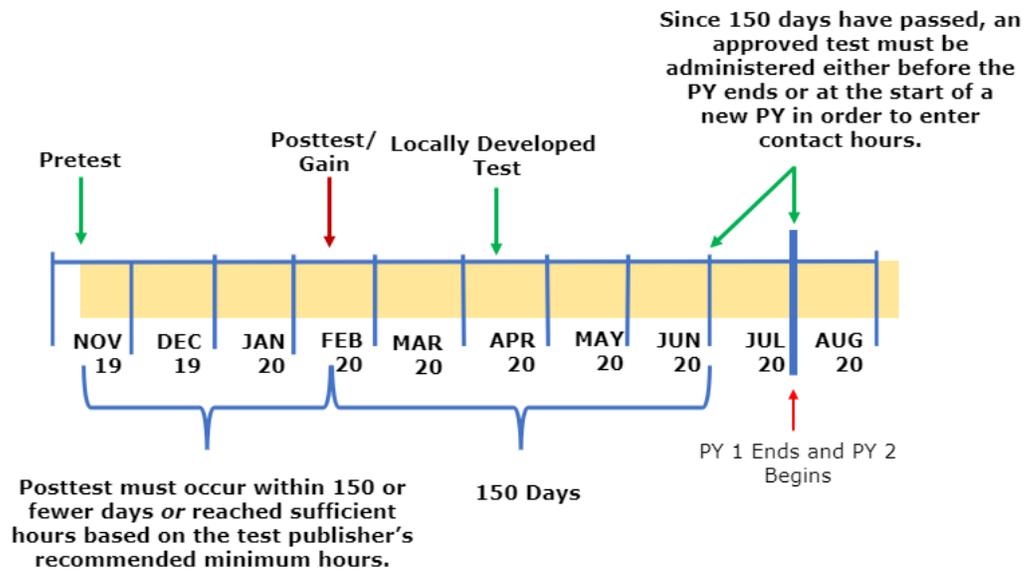
Required: All Exiters Must Test upon Return

A participant who has exited the program and returns either in the same program year or in a different one must take a test to reestablish eligibility before enrolling in an AEL class, regardless of how old the last test result recorded in TEAMS is, unless TWC AEL has issued a waiver..

Required: Retesting in a New Program Year

A participant in an active period of participation who crosses into a new program year with a test result older than 150 calendar days must take a test in the new program year before enrolling in an AEL class. Tests that are 150 or more days old are not carried forward into a new program year. In Figure 2, a participant who last received a posttest in December remains in the program and continues in a program year; the participant must be retested in the new program year.

Figure 2: Retesting in New Program Year



Required: Testing Participants within a Planned Gap

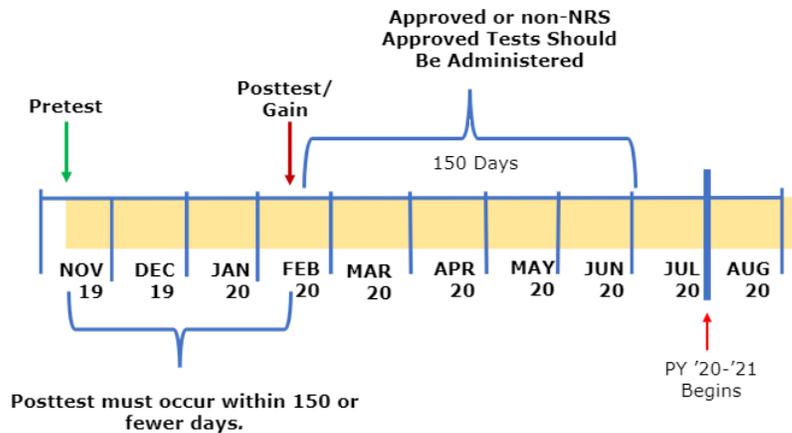
Before receiving contact time, participants returning from a planned gap in service must be given an approved test to ensure accurate placement into services on return, unless the participant’s last test is still valid (that is, within 150 calendar days and within the same program year). For more information on planned gaps, see AEL Letter 01-19, issued January 29, 2019, and titled “Periods of Participation for Adult Education and Literacy,” and subsequent issuances.

Recommended: Timely Posttesting within 150 Calendar Days

A participant may be posttested within 150 calendar days of the last test, with an approved test in each content area of the test, when he or she has reached sufficient hours based on the test publisher’s posttesting guidelines. Although testing is not required after a participant has earned a basic education MSG, continued testing on either approved tests or non-NRS-approved tests, further described in AEL Letter 03-20, and titled “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy,” is recommended to continue to monitor the participant’s progress. See Figure 3 for an illustration of this recommendation.

Non-NRS-approved tests, which include TABE Locator, GED and Hi-Set Official Practice tests, or other tests used to determine eligibility, must be recorded in TEAMS and must be included in the participant file.

Figure 3: Posttesting within 150 Calendar Days



Initial Testing in One Content Area Flexibility

Effective July 1, 2019, providers have had the option to test these individuals in just one content area to determine eligibility, enroll an individual in a class if the individual is found eligible, then stagger delivery of the remaining content area tests after the start of services while the individual is earning contact hours.

Providers retain the option to administer all tests to an individual at one time, or more than one test in a test series, before placing the participant in a class.

The objective of the new option is to offer flexibility for providers to schedule services in such a way as to reduce potential test fatigue and place participants more quickly into immediate educational services, as well as to improve retention.

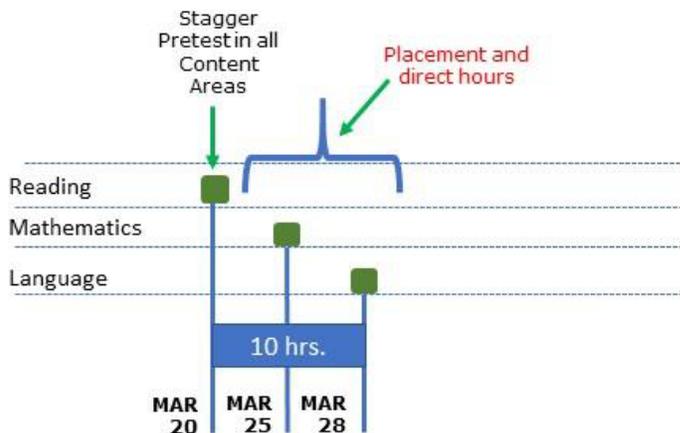
Requirements for Programs Electing to Implement the Option to Test in One Content Area

Providers must be aware of the following:

- **Five Class Days, No More than 12 Hours:** The provider must complete testing in the remaining content areas within five class days of direct instruction, but no later than the first 12 contact hours, unless the individual has requested an exemption from testing in all content areas. In the example shown in Figure 4, the individual pretests in all content areas

within the five class days/12-hour requirement. Classes are on Mondays and Wednesdays. The math test takes 1.75 hours, and the reading test takes 1.25 hours.

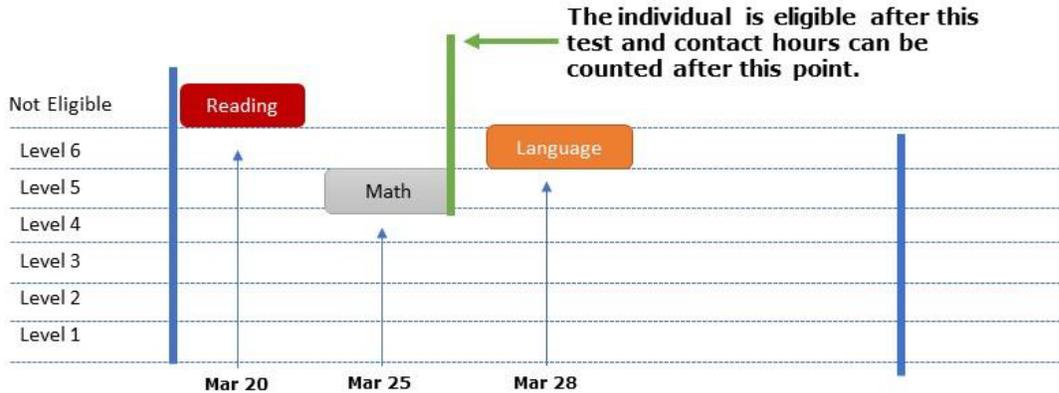
Figure 4: Pretest Flexibility



- **Flexibility in Selecting Content Areas:** Providers have discretion in selecting which content areas to administer first in the test series and should do so based on the individual's predetermined objectives, class curriculum, or other criteria.
- **After Eligibility, Tests Can Accrue Contact Hours:** While hours accrued during the initial pretest to determine eligibility cannot be recorded as contact hours, after eligibility has been established through the initial pretest, and individuals are placed into classes, the remainder of the tests in the pretest sequence can be counted toward direct contact hours by entering them into TEAMS. When direct testing time is entered, TEAMS will round the testing time to the nearest quarter hour.
- **Test until Eligible:** If the first test does not establish basic education eligibility, the provider must administer a test in another content area to determine eligibility. For example, if a participant scores at Level 6 High ASE in math, then basic education eligibility must be established with another test before the participant can receive AEL services. Figure 5 provides an illustration of this process. Individuals who lack a secondary school credential are eligible regardless of skill level; thus, an individual who scores at Level 6 High ASE in all content areas is eligible based on the need for high school completion, as described in the [Individuals Who Lack Secondary School Credential](#) section.

In the example in Figure 5, the individual has a diploma, tests too high for eligibility on the first test, takes a second test, and is found eligible. Contact hours can be counted after the second test.

Figure 5: Test until Eligible



- **Date Test Administration Accordingly:** While AEL programs have flexibility to initially test individuals in only one content area, providers must ensure that all test scores for each individual content area are dated the exact date that the test in that content area was completed.
- **New SOPs:** In most cases, providers will need to revise SOPs to manage the new testing cycle.

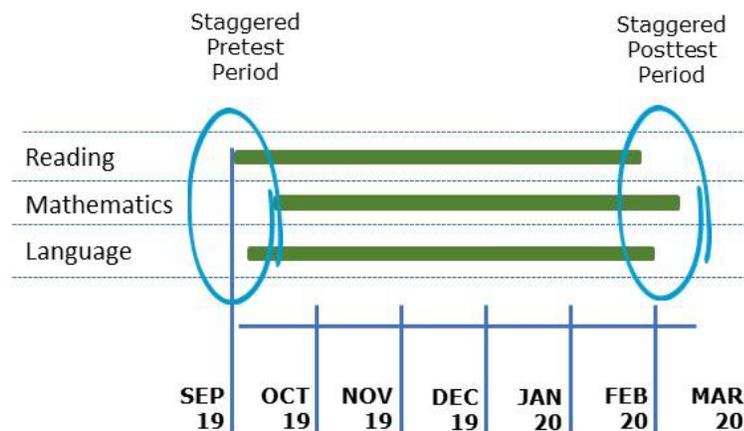
Considerations When Testing Initially in One Content Area

Providers are encouraged to consider the following points related to implementing the option of testing in one content area and directly placing participants into services, as follows:

Staggered Pretests Means Staggered Posttests

Providers must be aware that implementing staggered pretests requires that posttests also be staggered, as shown in Figure 6.

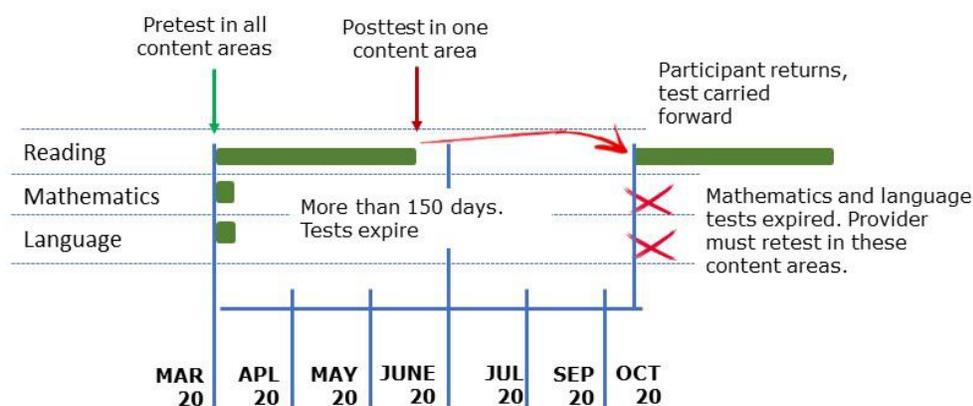
Figure 6: Staggered Pretests and Posttests Within Different Content Areas



Because a gain may be earned in any content area, providers are encouraged to consider posttesting in all content areas to increase the possibility that a participant will earn a gain. Posttesting in all content areas also increases the number of test results that can be pulled forward into a new program year to be used to determine the student’s instructional needs in an ongoing period of participation that crosses program years.

In Figure 7, a participant pretests in all content areas, but only posttests in reading. In the new program year, the reading test is carried forward, but because the other tests are expired, the provider must retest in those content areas unless the individual has requested an exemption from testing in all content areas.

Figure7: Posttests in all Content Areas



Exemptions from Testing in All Content Areas

All content areas of a test must be administered in the pretest and in the posttest sequences, with the following exceptions:

- If a participant is a referral from a college with a documented Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) score, providers only need to give the content areas for which the participant has placed on the TSIA (Levels 1–5).
- If a participant is enrolling in a class that only provides instruction in one content area, for example, a Math TSIA Boot Camp, the provider may administer a test in the content area of the class only.
- If a participant has passed a section of the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE), he or she is not required to receive a pretest in the content area he or she has passed.
- If a participant is enrolling in an IET program at the time of the pretest, the provider may administer the content area most relevant to measuring the participant’s success in the IET.
- If there is another documented reason for only administering one content area of the pretest, such as a specific participant goal or objective.

Providers must retain documentation of the reason for not administering all content areas of the pretest.

GENERAL TEST ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Introduction

This section provides overall requirements and guidelines related to test administration. The section includes information on participant orientation to the testing process, test security, and general test administration guidelines.

Providers must ensure that any individual administering tests meets the staff training and administration guidelines found in this guide, as well as in the test publisher's test administration manual. See the [Staff Professional Development Requirements](#) section. Providers must ensure that test administration requirements for remote testing follow the test publisher's guidelines.

Participant Orientation to the Testing Process

The testing process must be transparent and must be explained in advance to participants. Providers are encouraged to keep in mind that the quality of test data at intake increases the validity of testing and the effectiveness of service delivery to support participant goals and program performance.

Confidentiality

Providers must inform participants of the following:

- Test scores and participant files, which include PII, are kept confidential.
- Designated program staff will have access to test scores, but scores are kept secure and shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Participant information must be entered into a statewide database system, but it is kept confidential, and only certain local program staff and state office staff members have access to the database information.

If providers have data-sharing agreements with external organizations, participants also must be informed of how that information is used and of the process by which they provide their consent.

Setting Testers at Ease

It is important that before testing, every effort is made to help individuals feel at ease to produce valid and reliable test results.

Before Testing

Before a test, staff must:

- Inform individuals of the reason and purpose of the test length, and the number and frequency of breaks; and
- provide individuals the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the test environment and testing instruments.

Participants may need basic mouse and keyboard review if they are taking a computer-based test. Research indicates that familiarity with the room and plenty of time to “settle in” improves test performance, so individuals should be allowed to enter the room and get comfortable with the environment before taking the test.

After Testing

Providers must ensure that test scores are made available in a timely manner. Once individuals get their test scores, it is best to schedule a confidential review of each individual’s test results to explain the scores in the context of the individual’s goals and objectives, which have been collected during comprehensive assessment.

General Test Security Guidelines

Adhering to general and test-specific test security is essential to ensuring the integrity of the testing process and results. Test security begins from the time the provider receives test materials and must be monitored throughout the life of the testing process.

Security breaches may result in invalidation of test results and monitoring findings. Test publishers may suspend or cancel the testing privileges of the provider or testing center.

Providers are encouraged to consult the test publisher’s test administration guide for test-specific security guidelines.

General Procedures for Test Materials

As a rule, test materials that must be kept secure include the following:

- Test books
- Test directions
- Completed answer forms and scantron sheets
- Used scratch paper

Test administrators and proctors must maintain the security of test materials. Only approved and trained staff should handle test materials and have access to the secured area or cabinet where test materials are stored.

Common Unauthorized Practices

TWC monitoring has found the following unauthorized practices in use during program reviews. AEL grantees must ensure that test administrators do not take such actions. Local test administration training must include information on proper test administration and must define the authorized testing materials, scoresheets, and other materials to use to avoid the following:

- Using locally produced, unofficial test score sheets
- Scoring tests in pencil, not ink
- Using test booklets that have been written in
- Test takers using pens rather than pencils and then attempting to change test answers

In the rare event that a change must be made to a test form during administration, and erasing the answer is either not possible or creates an illegible answer, the change must have the test taker's signature as authorization. Providers must always consult the test publisher's guidelines when developing guidance related to test takers who make changes to their answers.

Unauthorized Materials and Clothing

Individuals taking tests are not permitted to bring the following items into the area where testing will occur:

- Cell phones and other electronic devices, except for calculators authorized for the test and authorized accommodation devices
- Books, notebooks, or any papers, unless it is authorized scratch paper
- Watches with calculator features
- Headphones or any listening device, unless authorized as accommodation devices
- Purses and backpacks
- Food or drinks
- Sunglasses, unless the sunglasses are authorized accommodation devices or otherwise medically necessary

Prior to the test, the test administrator or proctor must inform participants not to bring listed items to the testing area, and there must be a secure place where participants may store any unauthorized items.

Test administrators also must inform individuals that using prohibited items may result in test invalidation.

Security During Testing

Test security procedures must be addressed in the provider's SOP for PII and data management and/or in the SOP for testing and placement, or within another SOP that addresses test security guidelines.

Providers must include, at a minimum, the following in test security procedures:

- Processes for notifying individuals of:
 - unauthorized materials and clothing, as well as availability of secure storage for such items; and
 - unauthorized talking during testing.
- Processes for assuring the following:
 - Only official sample questions are used when preparing individuals for a test; old versions of tests must not be used as practice material unless approved by the test publisher. It is also important that actual test questions are not used in classroom instruction.
 - There are restrictions on visitors, other individuals who are not testing, other staff, or any other unauthorized individuals in the test area after testing has begun.
 - The test administrator or proctor can see all individuals throughout the testing process. Individuals must never be left alone with test materials.
 - Security of test administration manuals, actual participant paper-based or electronic tests, and answer sheets that contain marks, responses, or participant digital test results. These security measures should also include scratch paper, which should never be put into the trash or recycling bin. Scratch paper must be securely shredded or placed in a secure recycling container.
 - Disposal of test materials that have become defaced or unusable in accordance with the test publisher's guidelines.
 - Test administrators or proctors are always in control of the testing materials. Participants must never be allowed to collect, transport, or store test materials.
 - Calculator (if authorized for the test) memories are cleared before and after testing. For individuals who require them, Braille calculators may be used. Talking calculators or calculator memory functionality may also be used for individuals who are taking Braille versions of the test or who have received approval. (It is recommended that individuals bring and use the device with which they are used to working in their regular educational environments.)
 - Unauthorized duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form, unless explicit permission to do so is in writing, is obtained from the test publisher.
 - Original score sheets from tests and/or electronic score reports with results of an individual's pretest and posttest scores are stored and/or backed up on appropriate media or printed out and filed in hard copy and made available for local, state, and federal audit purposes.

Additionally, program staff must adhere to all test security procedures and policies provided by the test publisher.

OVERVIEW OF TESTS PERMITTED FOR USE IN TEXAS

Introduction

This section outlines the tests AEL providers may use in Texas as ABE, ASE, and ESL tests and the requirements for administering each test. Providers may assess English language learners with any approved test, including a test designed to assess ABE/ASE levels, listed in this guide, but must adhere to the requirements for documenting an English language learner, as outlined in the [Pretests for English Language Learners](#) section. Tests in this section may be used for remote testing, as described in AEL Letter 03-20, “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy.”

The following tests and forms are approved for ABE and ASE in Texas:

- The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) 11&12 (on paper and through a computer-based delivery format)⁸
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) forms 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, and 908 of the Reading GOALS Series (on paper and through a computer-based delivery format)⁹
- CASAS Math GOALS Series, Forms 900, 913, 914, 917, and 918¹⁰

The following tests and forms are approved for ESL in Texas:¹¹

- Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Literacy (forms B, C, and D on paper)
- BEST Plus 2.0 (forms D, E, and F on paper and through a computer-based delivery format)
- TABE Complete Language Assessment System—English (TABE CLAS-E) (forms A and B on paper and through a computer-based delivery format)

⁸ Approved for use in the NRS through February 2024, per *Federal Register* Notice, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2017-09-07/pdf/2017-19004.pdf>

⁹ Approved for use in the NRS through February 2025, per *Federal Register* Notice, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2018-02-05/pdf/2018-02237.pdf>

¹⁰ Approved for use in the NRS through March 2022, per *Federal Register* Notice, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-03-07/pdf/2019-04152.pdf>

¹¹ Approved for use in the NRS through February 2021, per *Federal Register* Notice <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2018-09-21/pdf/2018-20590.pdf>

- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Life and Work Listening (LW Listening), Forms 981L, 982L, 983L, 984L, 985L, and 986L
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Life and Work Reading (LW Reading), Forms 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, 188

Requirement to Follow Test Publisher’s Administration Policies

AEL providers must adhere to all test publishers’ test administration policies, including the requirement to administer a locator or appraisal to determine the most suitable test form for administration to an individual. The test administrator, sometimes referred to as the examiner or proctor, administers tests and verbally provides test directions to individuals and is responsible for ensuring compliance to administrator and Assessment Guide policies before, during, and after individuals take the test on the day of the test. The testing supervisor oversees assessment services for the entire AEL program.

Providers must follow test administration training requirements outlined in the [Staff Qualifications and Definitions of Roles](#) section.

Administering Remote Testing

Providers may implement remote test proctoring using the assessments approved for use in this guide and must adhere to the test publisher’s procedures for remote testing. TCALL will publish updated information on virtual testing on the TCALL website’s Remote Testing Guidance Chart at <https://tcall.tamu.edu/docs/RemoteTestingGuidanceChart.pdf>.

Additional guidance on remote testing may be found in AEL Letter 03-20, “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy.”

Requirement to Use Test Publisher’s Materials

Providers must not create or modify test materials when administering and scoring tests and must use only the test publisher’s materials, including locators/appraisals, test booklets, scantrons, scoring sheets, and test administration manuals.

Unless expressly permitted in the Assessment Guide—as with the administration of a locally developed literacy screening tool for the BEST Literacy—modifications and locally developed test products are not authorized to be used.

Publisher Contact Information and Purchasing Tests

Providers must order tests from the test publishers and can find information on how to order assessments on publishers’ websites, as shown in Table 1. For additional assistance, providers may also contact the statewide professional development center for information on discounts for bulk orders that may be available.

Table 2: Publisher Contact Information and Purchasing Tests

Publisher and Tests	Website	Phone
<p>CASAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LW Listening ● L&W Reading ● Reading GOALS ● Math GOALS 	<p>www.casas.org</p>	<p>1 (800) 255-1036 or 1 (858) 292-2900</p>
<p>Data Recognition Corp (DRC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TABE CLAS-E ● TABE 11&12 	<p>https://www.datarecognitioncorp.com</p>	<p>1 (800) 538-9547</p>
<p>Center of Applied Linguistics (CAL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BEST Plus 2.0 ● BEST Literacy 	<p>http://calstore.cal.org/default.aspx</p>	<p>1 (855) 543- 9461</p>

Publishers’ Recommended Hours between Tests

While providers are encouraged to follow the test publisher’s recommended hours between tests, programs must, at a minimum, provide the number of instructional hours required between tests, as shown in Table 2: Test Publishers’ Recommended Hours Between Tests. The column that shows the minimum required hours between tests corresponds to both the test publisher’s and TWC’s minimum required hours, as opposed to recommended hours as a best practice.

Posttesting must occur at least one calendar day after the participant has accrued the appropriate number of instructional hours.

Table 3: Test Publishers' Recommended Hours between Tests

Publisher and Tests	Required Minimum Hours between Tests	Publisher's Recommended Minimum Number of Hours between Tests	Publisher's Recommended Maximum Number of Hours between Tests
<p>CASAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LW Listening ● L&W Reading ● Reading GOALS ● Math GOALS 	40 hours	Also recommended is a two-month lapse, or 60 calendar days, between tests, or 70-100 hours	Also recommended is a two-month lapse, or 60 calendar days, between tests
<p>DRC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TABE CLAS-E ● TABE 11&12 	40 hours for ABE/ESL and 30 hours for ASE	<p>For individuals testing into NRS ABE and all ESL levels, 40 hours is recommended.</p> <p>For individuals testing into NRS Levels 5 & 6 (ASE), 30 hours is recommended.</p> <p>50 hours for testing with alternate forms</p> <p>60 hours for testing with same form</p>	<p>For individuals testing into NRS Levels 5 & 6 (ASE), 59 hours is recommended.</p> <p>60 hours for testing with alternate forms</p> <p>80 hours for testing with same form</p>
<p>CAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BEST Plus 2.0 ● BEST Literacy 	60 hours	80 hours	100 hours

Providers must be aware that CASAS does not allow the use of the same test form twice in a row. Alternate forms must be given at the same level, or one of the alternate forms at the next level, depending on the guidance in the Next Assigned Test chart in the test administration manual.

DRC's pretesting and posttesting recommendations for TABE tests are available online at https://tabetest.com/PDFs/Pre_Post_Testing_Recommendations_NRS_Reporting_TABE_TABE_CLAS_E.pdf.

CAL's pretesting and posttesting recommendations for BEST tests are available in the frequently asked questions document online at <http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/Frequently-Asked-Questions-CAL-Adult-ESL-Assessments.pdf>.

Testing Before the Required Minimum Hours of Instruction

Exceptions that allow testing below the required minimum number of hours between pretest and posttest, as outlined by the test publisher, should be rare and limited, and all justifications for early testing must be documented and maintained in the participant's file for monitoring purposes.

Justifications for early testing may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The participant, due to the intensity of program or quality of instruction, has made progress more quickly than the publisher's recommended number of hours.
- The participant is anticipated to leave the program before reaching the minimum number of recommended hours and has made progress.
- The participant is determined to be test ready, intends to take the HSE exam, and will not return to the program for a posttest.
- The provider can document that instructional time has been reduced in order to meet an employer objective in a workplace literacy class.

Testing After the Recommended Maximum Hours

Additionally, participants who have far more instructional hours than the test publisher's recommended maximum number of hours between tests, or who are tested late, must have documentation in their file to explain why they were not posttested in a timely manner.

Examples of justifications may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The participant needs additional instructional time to make a gain, as identified by the instructor.
- The participant has already attained a Type 1a MSG in the program year, and the program intends to use instructor-developed tests for further assessment.
- The participant has attained a Postsecondary Enrollment or HSE Achievement MSG.

NRS Test Benchmarks and EFL Indicators

Table 3: EFL Descriptors and Scale Scores for ABE Tests (All Content Areas) and Table 4: EFL Descriptors and Scale Scores for ESL Tests outline the test score ranges across each of the NRS Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) for ABE, including ASE and ESL. There are six levels each in ABE/ASE and ESL—12 levels in total. Providers can read more about each EFL and the skills an individual in a specific EFL will have in the TA Guide at <https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Guide82019.pdf>.

AEL grantees must be aware that TWC anticipates that the US Department of Education will approve new tests or reapprove new versions of existing tests over the next year, so the tables are subject to change. TWC will release any changes to the tables through an AEL Letter and update of the Assessment Guide.

Table 4: EFL Descriptors and Scale Scores for ABE Tests (All Content Areas)

NRS Educational Functioning Level for ABE/ASE Levels	TABE 11 & 12 Scale Scores	CASAS Reading GOALS Scale Scores	CASAS Math GOALS Scale Scores
Beginning ABE Literacy (ABE Level 1—all subjects)	(Grade level 0–1): Reading: 300–441 Mathematics: 300–448 Language: 300–457	Reading: 203 and below	Mathematics: 193 and below
Beginning Basic Education (ABE Level 2—all subjects)	(Grade level 2–3): Reading: 442–500 Mathematics: 449–495 Language: 458–510	Reading: 204–216	Mathematics: 194–203
Low Intermediate Basic Education (ABE Level 3—all subjects)	(Grade level 4–5): Reading: 501–535 Mathematics: 496–536 Language: 511–546	Reading: 217–227	Mathematics: 204–214
High Intermediate Basic Education (ABE Level 4—ELA)	(Grade level 6–8): Reading: 536–575 Language: 547–583	Reading: 228–238	Mathematics: 215–225

and Middle Intermediate Basic Education (ABE Level 4— Mathematics)	Mathematics: 537–595			
Low ASE (ABE Level 5—ELA) and High Intermediate Basic Education (ABE Level 5— Mathematics)	(Grade level 9–10): Reading: 576–616 Language: 584–630 Mathematics: 596–656	Reading: 239–248		Mathematics: 226–235
High ASE (ABE Level 6—ELA) and ASE (ABE Mathematics— Level 6)	(Grade level 11–12): Reading: 617–800 Language: 631–800 Mathematics: 657–800	Reading: 249 and above		Mathematics: 236 and above
NRS Educational Functioning Levels for ESL	CASAS Life and Work (L&W) Reading 80 Series and L&W Listening 980 Series	BEST Plus 2.0	BEST Literacy	TABE CLAS-E¹²
Beginning ESL Literacy	Reading: 180 and below	88–361	0–20 (SPL ¹³ 0–1)	Total Reading and Writing: 225–394

¹² TABE CLAS-E scale scores shown here are for total scores and do not indicate score ranges for individual tests.

¹³ SPL refers to Student Performance Level.

(ESL Level 1—all subjects)	L&W Listening: 162–180			Total Listening and Speaking: 230–407
Low Beginning ESL (ESL Level 2—all subjects)	Reading: 181–190 L&W Listening: 181–189	362–427	21–52 (SPL 2)	Total Reading and Writing: 395–441 Total Listening and Speaking: 408–449
High Beginning ESL (ESL Level 3—all subjects)	Reading: 191–200 L&W Listening: 190–199	428–452	53–63 (SPL 3)	Total Reading and Writing: 442–482 Total Listening and Speaking: 450–485
Low Intermediate ESL (ESL Level 4—all subjects)	Reading: 201–210 L&W Listening: 200–209	453–484	64–67 (SPL 4)	Total Reading and Writing: 483–514 Total Listening and Speaking: 486–525
High Intermediate ESL (ESL Level 5—all subjects)	Reading: 211–220 L&W Listening: 210–218	485–524	68–75 (SPL 5)	Total Reading and Writing: 515–556 Total Listening and Speaking: 526–558
Advanced ESL (ESL Level 6—all subjects)	Reading: 221–235 L&W Listening: 219–227	525–564 (exit 565) and higher	76–78 (SPL 6)	Total Reading and Writing: 557–600 Total Listening and Speaking: 559–600

TABE Tests

Providers are encouraged to contact DRC, the publisher of TABE, for additional information on TABE tests and how to purchase test materials at 1 (800) 538-9547 or www.tabetest.com.

Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE®) 11&12

TABE 11&12 is an NRS-approved test published by DRC for ABE (grade levels 1–8) and ASE (grade levels 9–12) individuals, as well as for adults functioning at lower math, reading, and language skills. The purpose of TABE 11&12 is to assess adult basic skills in the content areas of reading, mathematics, and language. The test is aligned to OCTAE’s College and Career Readiness Standards in these three areas. Approved forms for both paper-based and computer-based delivery formats are Form 11 and Form 12.

The TABE series includes versions of the test at various skill areas. The levels are:

- Limited Literacy (L)
- Easy (E)
- Medium (M)
- Difficult (D)
- Advanced (A)

Use of TABE 11&12 Locator During Pretesting

Providers must administer the *TABE* locator test (locator) in each content area to determine the correct level of each subtest to be administered to the participant for initial placement. The locator may indicate a different-level test for each content area.

If a participant is unable to complete the locator (for example, the participant has no reading or writing skills), the following alternatives for testing are available:

- The TABE Level L should be administered to participants who are unable to read or write to complete the locator. TABE Literacy test scores are entered into TEAMS.
- The TABE Word List may be used for initial appraisal of participants who are unable to read or write to complete the locator. Participants tested with the TABE Word List are not reflected on the federal report unless another NRS-approved test is administered.

DRC encourages correct usage of the locator to determine appropriate tests and levels to be administered.

Providers are not required to document locator results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the locator in the participant’s file.

Parallel Forms

There are only two forms for TABE 11&12, which are Form 11 and Form 12. These parallel forms should be administered alternately between pretest and posttest.

Administration and Scoring Procedures for TABE 11&12

Test administrators must follow the test administration requirements outlined in DRC’s TABE 11&12 Test Administration Manual, which includes guidance on procedures to follow before, during, and after administering the test. DRC requires there be at least one test examiner, and any additional floating examiners as needed, for every 20 individuals in the testing room.

TABE 11&12 may be administered in both paper-based and computer-based testing formats. DRC computer-based tests are administered using DRC Insight, a web-based system that does not require software. Tests administered through DRC Insight on a computer are also scored by DRC Insight. Paper-based tests may be hand-scored or scanned using TABE Scanning Services and then transferred to the online DRC Insight Portal system.

When paper-based tests are hand scored, raw scores must be converted to scale scores before entering score information into TEAMS. TABE 11&12 scoring guides must be used to convert raw scores into scale scores and NRS levels.

When scoring the pretest, test administrators should make note of participants who score at the top NRS level of a content area. These participants will need to be posttested at the next highest TABE® level in that content area to show a measurable gain.

Participants cannot earn a gain on a posttest if placed in NRS Level 6 (High ASE). Participants at this level must show an MSG gain through a Postsecondary Enrollment MSG or HSE Achievement MSG, described in AEL guidance on education, training, and employment outcomes, including the AEL Guide.

TABE Testing Times

Maximum allowable times for TABE tests are set forth on DRC’s website at http://www.tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_11_12_Max_Testing_Times.pdf (updated July 2019) and in Table 5. Any changes to test times approved by the US Department of Education will be communicated to AEL grantees through an AEL Letter and the updated Assessment Guide.

Table 5: TABE 11&12 Maximum Allowable Testing Times

Level	Reading Part 1	Reading Part 2	Language	Math Part 1	Math Part 2
E	50 minutes	50 minutes	55 minutes	65 minutes	65 minutes
M	50 minutes	50 minutes	55 minutes	55 minutes	10 minutes
D	50 minutes	50 minutes	55 minutes	35 minutes	30 minutes
A	50 minutes	50 minutes	55 minutes	30 minutes	35 minutes

Total testing times for each locator subtest are as follows:

- Reading—35 minutes
- Language—20 minutes
- Math—10 minutes (Part 1) and 10 minutes (Part 2)

TABE Complete Language Assessment System—English

The *TABE CLAS-E* is an NRS-approved test published by DRC that provides teachers with a reliable, easy-to-use system that accurately identifies the instructional needs of ESL participants. *TABE CLAS-E* assesses English proficiency levels to accurately measure participants’ reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The speaking test is optional and gives providers flexibility in the assessment process.

Additional information and answers to frequently asked questions about the *TABE CLAS-E* are available at http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_CLAS-E.pdf.

Use of TABE CLAS-E Locator during Pretesting

Providers must administer the *TABE CLAS-E* locator in each content area to determine the correct level of each subtest to be administered to the participant for initial placement.

Providers are not required to document locator test results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the locator in the participant’s file.

Parallel Forms

Pretests and posttests are available at four levels to ensure that participants test within the correct range for their abilities. Different forms must be used for pretesting and posttesting. Forms A and B may be administered alternately for posttesting.

Administration and Scoring Procedures for the TABE CLAS-E

The *TABE CLAS-E* provides the number-correct (raw) and scale scores for each skill area—Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking—for the total battery of tests. Providers must convert the raw score to the scale score for each subtest and enter the scale score for each subtest into TEAMS. Additional score reports include NRS proficiency levels, objective mastery scores, and Participant Performance Levels (SPLs). *TABE CLAS-E* also offers scoring with TestMate *TABE*.

Testing Time for TABE CLAS-E

Estimated times to complete each section of the *TABE CLAS-E* are the following:

- Reading—25 minutes
- Listening—20 minutes
- Writing—47 minutes
- Speaking—15 minutes

Documentation of TABE Tests

Providers must maintain documentation of tests provided to individuals. For *TABE* tests, it is required that, at a minimum, answer sheets be maintained in the participant file. If the *TABE*

Level L test booklet is administered to a student, it should be maintained in the file, as it is a consumable. See the [Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities](#) section.

BEST Test Series

The BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy tests are ESL tests published by CAL. The BEST Plus 2.0 is designed to assess speaking proficiency and the BEST Literacy is designed to assess reading and writing skills.

For more information on the Best Plus 2.0 and Best Literacy, such as training, ordering tests, and other general questions, providers can refer to CAL's Frequently Asked Questions at <http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/Frequently-Asked-Questions-CAL-Adult-ESL-Assessments.pdf>.

Administration Requirements for BEST Tests

Providers must administer both the BEST Plus 2.0 and a literacy screening tool, either the BEST Literacy or a locally developed standardized literacy screening tool, to all individuals to ensure valid assessment of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. For an example of a standardized literacy screening tool, see the [Standardized Literacy Screening Tool Example](#) section. If an individual exhibits no literacy skills whatsoever, providers must administer a standardized literacy screening tool, and, depending on the individual's level of literacy, they may forgo administering the BEST Literacy test. All individuals, however, must be administered the BEST 2.0, an assessment of English listening and speaking skills, regardless of their ability to complete the standardized literacy screening tool or the BEST Literacy test.

BEST Plus 2.0

The BEST Plus 2.0 is an oral test administered face-to-face in an individual setting and is available in a print version and computer-adaptive version. Information on the BEST Plus 2.0 test usage policy is available online at <http://www.cal.org/aea/pdfs/BP2.0-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf>.

Use of BEST Plus 2.0 Locator During Pretesting

The print-based version of the BEST Plus 2.0 includes versions of the test at the following skill levels:

- Level 1 (low)
- Level 2 (middle)
- Level 3 (high)

The computer-adaptive version of BEST Plus 2.0 does not have a locator. Test items are selected by the computer program, which chooses the most appropriate question based on the examinee's demonstrated ability level on previous responses.

Parallel Forms

The print-based version has three parallel forms (D, E, and F) for pretesting and posttesting purposes. Different forms must be used for pretesting and posttesting.

The computer-adaptive version of BEST Plus 2.0 does not have parallel forms. The program randomizes questions and question difficulty from a large bank of questions. Test software ensures that individuals do not receive the same question twice.

Administration and Scoring Procedures

Individuals taking the print-based version are administered a locator, which is scored by a test administrator as the test progresses. Answers are assessed in listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. An individual is then given the appropriate level test based on locator scores as indicated on the chart in the individual test booklet. The raw scores are entered into the computer via the BEST Plus 2.0 scores management software to obtain a complete score report. Scores from the print-based version are comparable to the scores from the computer-adaptive version.

The computer-adaptive version of BEST Plus 2.0 selects the test items appropriate for the individual, as determined by the administrator's scoring of the individual's responses using the BEST Plus scoring rubric. On completion of the test, test administrators can access an immediate score report.

Testing Time for BEST Plus 2.0

The Best Plus 2.0 takes from five to 20 minutes, depending on the individual's proficiency level.

The BEST Literacy

The BEST Literacy is a print-based, combined test of reading and writing skills in authentic situations specifically geared to adult English language learners. Reading tasks include basic life skills, such as reading dates on a calendar, labels on food and clothing, bulletin announcements, and newspaper want ads. Writing tasks include addressing an envelope, writing a rent check, filling out a personal background form, and writing personal notes.

Screening for Nonliterate Individuals

The BEST Literacy test does not have a locator test, although some adults entering an English language program may have limited knowledge of written English and/or literacy skills and will struggle with or be unable to complete a literacy test such as BEST Literacy. In some instances, individuals may exhibit no literacy skills and have limited knowledge of written English and/or have limited or no literacy skills in their native language. For example, nonliterate individuals may:

- exhibit difficulties completing enrollment forms;
- directly inform the intake or test administration staff that they cannot read or write;
- refuse to take the BEST Literacy test;

- declare before even looking at the BEST Literacy test that he or she would be unable to understand any portion of it; or
- not open the BEST Literacy test booklet when it is distributed.

In these instances, providers must administer a standardized literacy screening tool to assess the individual's reading and writing abilities.

Standardized Literacy Screening Tool Example

Providers should develop and have available during testing a standardized literacy screening tool using the following six sections:

1. Name
2. Address
3. Date of birth
4. Signature
5. Today's date
6. Tell us something about yourself.

The standardized screening tool is scored on a scale of one to six, one point for each section. If an individual correctly completes any of the first five questions on the tool but does not satisfactorily complete question six with one legible and understandable statement, she or he is not required to take the BEST Literacy test.

Maintaining Documentation for the Standardized Literacy Screening Tool

Providers that use the standardized literacy screening tool as the only assessment used to determine a nonliterate individual's reading and writing abilities are required to maintain documentation of the screening tool in the participant's file.

Parallel Forms

BEST Literacy is available in three parallel forms (B, C, and D) for pretesting and posttesting. Providers must use different forms for pretesting and posttesting.

Administration and Scoring Procedures for the BEST Literacy

BEST Literacy can be administered individually or to groups. Each examinee is given one test booklet that contains the instructions and the test questions. The test administrator verbally provides test directions, and individuals write their answers in the test booklet.

Scoring instructions are provided in the BEST Literacy Test Manual. Using the separate scoring sheet that corresponds to the appropriate examinee test booklet, the individuals' responses are scored based on comprehensibility. Correct answers for the reading and writing sections are provided for the scorer on the scoring sheet.

The BEST Literacy Test Manual contains a writing rubric and benchmarks to score the writing tasks. A raw score is calculated based on the combined scores of the reading and writing tasks.

A scale score is determined using the conversion tables located in the BEST Literacy Test Manual.

Testing Time for BEST Literacy

The BEST Literacy should be completed within one hour.

Documentation of BEST Tests

Providers must maintain documentation of tests provided to individuals. For the BEST Literacy test, it is required that, at a minimum, entire test booklets, cover sheets, and answer sheets be maintained in the participant file and that the BEST 2.0 answer sheets be maintained. As the BEST Plus 2.0 picture cue book is reusable, providers do not need to maintain that in the file. See the [Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities](#) section.

CASAS Tests

Administration and Scoring Procedures for CASAS

CASAS offers online and paper-based testing options. Test administrators must follow the test administration requirements outlined in CASAS test administration manuals for each test.

CASAS eTests are online versions of paper tests. *The eTests and paper tests are interchangeable. Pretests and posttests do not have to be administered in the same modality.* The online system combines the locator and the pretest. TOPSpro Enterprise is the web-based data management system for CASAS, managing eTests, scanned answer sheets, or manually entered test scores to help programs score tests. TOPSpro Enterprise software and CASAS eTests automatically convert raw scores to scale scores.

- The Reading and Math GOALS tests and the Life and Work Reading tests can be administered using CASAS eTests or paper test booklets.
- The CASAS Life and Work Listening and Life and Work Reading tests can be administered using CASAS eTests or paper-based booklets and audio CDs.

Posttests

CASAS provides recommended posttest forms based on previous scale scores. These recommended posttest forms are provided in the CASAS test administration manual for each test series. Students taking the eTests will be automatically placed in the next appropriate level test.

CASAS Reading GOALS Series

The CASAS Reading GOALS Series is a series of reading tests designed for ABE and ASE participants. Reading GOALS is approved for NRS reporting through February 2025. The Reading GOALS Series assesses adult basic skills in reading comprehension. The test measures vocabulary, reading comprehension, and higher-order reading skills. Approved forms for both

paper-based and computer-based delivery formats are Forms 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, and 908. Reading passages and test questions are academically rigorous and set in real-life contexts, including workplace contexts, that are relevant and engaging for adult learners.

More information on the Reading GOALS Series is available on the CASAS website at <http://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/reading-goals>. Frequently asked questions on Reading GOALS are available at <https://www.casas.org/docs/default-source/product-brochures/reading-goals-for-abe-and-ase-faqs.pdf?sfvrsn=26?Status=Master>.

Use of Reading GOALS Locator/Appraisal during Pretesting

- For the CASAS eTests online version of the Reading GOALS Series, the Form 104R Reading GOALS Locator can be used to place an individual with the correct test form. The Locator takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
- For the print-based version of the CASAS Reading GOALS Series, the Form 900R Reading GOALS Appraisal is the only permitted appraisal. The appraisal functions as a locator with 28 questions. Allow up to 30 minutes for this test.

CASAS Reading GOALS also offers optional Writing Screening and Reading Screening activities to determine whether an individual has very minimal writing or reading abilities. Providers are not required to document locator or appraisal test results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the paper-based appraisal in the participant’s file.

Parallel Forms

There are two alternate pretests and posttests at each test level (A through D) in the Reading GOALS Series, and the two forms are parallel in content and difficulty. The odd-numbered form is usually a pretest form, and the even-numbered form is usually a posttest form. However, providers may use either form for either purpose. Form numbers are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Reading GOALS Alternate Test Forms

Level	Alternate Test Form Numbers (Reading GOALS Progress Tests)
A	901R, 902R
B	903R, 904R
C	905R, 906R
D	907R, 908R

Providers may refer to the Reading GOALS Test Administration Manual for information on the next tests that programs should administer based on an individual’s scores.

Pretesting and Posttesting

Individuals who score too low on a Level A pretest to obtain a scale score may use Form 27/28 as a Beginning Literacy level test to receive a scale score. Additionally, individuals who score too low on Levels B, C, or D pretests to receive a scale score must retest at the next lower level to obtain a scale score. Similarly, individuals who score above the scale score range can retest at the next higher level.

Individuals who achieve a high-end (also called conservative estimate) scale score on a pretest or posttest may retest at a higher level or use the conservative estimate score, as outlined in the Reading GOALS Test Administration Manual.

Testing Time for Reading GOALS

Maximum allowable times for the tests are listed in Table 7. Please note that it is acceptable to allow individuals a few extra minutes to complete the question they are working on when the test administrator calls time.

Table 7: Reading GOALS Maximum Allowable Testing Times

CASAS Level	CASAS Reading GOALS Form Number	Number of Test Items	Maximum Allowed Time
A	Form 901	39	60 minutes
A	Form 902	39	60 minutes
B	Form 903	40	75 minutes
B	Form 904	40	75 minutes
C	Form 905	40	75 minutes
C	Form 906	40	75 minutes
D	Form 907	40	75 minutes
D	Form 908	40	75 minutes

CASAS Math GOALS Series

The CASAS Math GOALS 900 Series is a series of math tests designed for ABE and ASE participants. Math GOALS is approved for NRS reporting through March 2022. The Math GOALS Series assesses academic math skills, both for basic and advanced levels, and, like other CASAS tests, has work-focused questions. Approved forms for both paper-based and computer-based delivery formats are Forms 900, 913, 914, 917, and 918. As described on the CASAS website, “This math series helps to identify the rigorous academic and everyday math skills that your students need as you prepare them to function productively in today's society, to transition to postsecondary education and training, and to achieve success in the workplace.”

More information on the Math GOALS Series is available on the CASAS website at <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/math-goals>. Frequently asked questions on Math GOALS are available at https://www.casas.org/docs/default-source/product-brochures/math-goals-for-abe-and-ase-faqs.pdf?sfvrsn=c4333d5a_10?Status=Master.

Use of Math GOALS Locator/Appraisal during Pretesting

- For the CASAS eTests online version of the Math GOALS Series, the Form 104M Math GOALS Locator can be used. The locator takes about 15 minutes to complete and has 10 questions.
- For the print-based version of the CASAS Math GOALS Series, the Form 900M Math GOALS Appraisal is the only permitted appraisal. The appraisal has 20 questions and takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Providers are not required to document locator or appraisal test results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the paper-based appraisal in the participant’s file.

Parallel Forms

The Math GOALS Series offers two alternate pretests and posttests at Levels A/B and Levels C/D. Form numbers are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: CASAS Math GOALS Alternate Test Forms

Level	Alternate Test Form Numbers (Math GOALS Progress Tests)
A/B	913M, 914M
C/D	917M, 918M

Providers may refer to the Math GOALS Test Administration Manual for information on the next tests that programs should administer based on an individual’s scores.

Pretesting and Posttesting

It is recommended that individuals who score too low on Level A/B Math pretest to obtain a scale score be given another content area of the test (Reading, for example) in order to place the individual in a class. Once individuals have obtained additional instruction, the individual could then be given the Math test to assess instructional levels. Additionally, individuals who score too low on the Level C/D pretest to receive a scale score must retest at the next lower level to obtain a scale score.

Individuals who achieve a high-end (conservative estimate) scale score on a Level A/B pretest or posttest may retest at Level C/D to get an accurate baseline pretest score, or use the conservative estimate score, as outlined in the Math GOALS Test Administration Manual.

Testing Time for Math GOALS

Maximum allowable times for the tests are listed in Table 9. Please note that it is acceptable to allow individuals a few extra minutes to complete the question they are working on when the test administrator calls time.

Table 9: Math GOALS Maximum Allowable Testing Times

CASAS Level	CASAS Math GOALS Form Number	Number of Test Items	Maximum Allowed Time
A/B	Forms 913 and 914	40	60 minutes
C/D	Forms 917 and 918	38	75 minutes

CASAS Life and Work Listening Tests

The CASAS Life and Work Listening 980 Series is an NRS-approved test series published by CASAS for ESL participants. The 980 Series is approved for NRS reporting through February 2021, unless further extended by the US Department of Education. The tests are available online with CASAS eTests as paper-based tests using CDs for the listening prompts. The tests can be administered individually or in a group setting.

The CASAS Life and Work 980 Listening Series focuses on employment and life skills content, with test questions framed around real-life situations.

This test series assesses listening comprehension. Test questions range from matching a photo to an accompanying description, to listening to a comprehension question and responding with a multiple-choice answer, to selecting the best next line to complete a conversation.

More information on the CASAS Life and Work Listening 980 Series is available on the CASAS website at <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/life-and-work-listening>.

Use of CASAS L&W Listening Locator/Appraisal During Pretesting

Providers may use either the CASAS Form 80 Listening Appraisal or the Listening Locator (Form 89L), available as CASAS eTests or the Form 80 Listening Appraisal in the CD version, to determine the appropriate pretest form to use. Providers have the option of creating and using a locally developed procedure to determine the pretest most appropriate for an individual. Providers are not required to document locator or appraisal test results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the paper-based appraisal in the participant's file.

Parallel Forms

There are two alternate pretests and posttests in the Life and Work Listening Series, and the two forms are parallel in content and difficulty. The odd-numbered form is usually a pretest form and the even-numbered form is usually a posttest form. However, programs may use either form for either purpose. Form numbers are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: CASAS L&W Listening Alternate Test Forms

Level	Alternate Test Form Numbers for Life and Work Listening Progress Tests
A	981L, 982L
B	983L, 984L
C	985L, 986L

Testing Time for CASAS L&W Listening

All tests in the CASAS Life and Work Listening 980 Series require 49 to 51 minutes to complete, depending on the form.

CASAS Life and Work Reading Tests

CASAS Life and Work Reading Series (Forms 81, 82, 81X, 82X, 83, 84, 85, 86, 185, 186, 187, 188) is a series of reading tests for ESL participants. This series has NRS approval through February 2021, unless further extended by the NRS. The test is available online with CASAS eTests and in a paper-based version. The tests can be administered individually or in a group setting.

The CASAS Life and Work Reading Series assesses the progress of participants' reading skills and focuses on measuring reading skills in real-life and workplace contexts.

More information on the CASAS Life and Work Reading Series is available on the CASAS website at <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/life-and-work-reading>.

Use of CASAS L&W Reading Locator/Appraisal during Pretesting

To determine which pretest to administer to an individual:

- For the CASAS eTests online version of the Life and Work Reading Series, the Form 102R Locator may be used. The locator usually takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete.
- For the print-based version of the CASAS Life and Work Reading Series, use Form 80 Appraisal. The appraisal has 25 questions and has a set time of 25 minutes to administer.

Providers are not required to document locator or appraisal test results in TEAMS but are required to maintain documentation of the paper-based appraisal in the participant's file.

Parallel Forms

There are two alternate pretests and posttests in the Life and Work Reading Series, and the two forms are parallel in content and difficulty. The odd-numbered form is usually a pretest form, and the even-numbered form is usually a posttest form. However, providers may use either form for either purpose. Form numbers are listed in Table 11.

Table 11: CASAS L&W Reading Alternate Test Forms

Level	Alternate Test Form Numbers for L&W Reading Progress Tests
A	81, 82
AX	81X, 82X <i>(Note: These forms are an extension of Level A; they are a bridge between Levels A and B.)</i>
B	83, 84
C	185, 186 85, 86 <i>(Note: Forms 85 and 86 are employment-focused and should not be used as alternating forms with 185 and 186.)</i>
D	187, 188

Testing Time for CASAS L&W Reading

Providers should allow up to one hour for all pretests and posttests in the CASAS Life and Work Reading Series.

Documentation of CASAS Tests

Providers must maintain documentation of tests provided to individuals. For the CASAS tests, it is required that, at a minimum, answer sheets be maintained in the participant file. If the Form 27 Literacy level test book is administered to a student, it should be maintained in the file, as it is a consumable. See the [Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities](#) section.

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Introduction

This section provides an overview of professional development (PD) requirements for staff members whose responsibilities relate to test administration.

Required Program Staff Involved with Assessment and Testing

AEL statewide grants require programs to employ staff members who meet specific professional development requirements and minimum staff qualifications. Several required staff positions have specific duties related to testing and assessment:

- **Lead for Quality Assurance:** Staff responsible for compliance with and adherence to grant and AEL policy and procedural guidance; SOPs, including procedures for data collection, PII; and required performance documentation.
- **Lead for Performance Accountability:** Staff responsible for models for program performance and data management, data collection and reporting, oversight of testing and assessment staff and functions, compliance to this guide, and related TWC performance policy and guidance.
- **Professional Development Coordinator:** Staff responsible for ensuring that staff members meet PD and training requirements, which include testing and assessment training.
- **Lead for Distance Learning:** Staff responsible for leading distance learning efforts in the AEL program and ensuring that distance learning participants are assessed in the same way as non-distance learning participants.

Staff Qualifications and Definitions of Roles

Overall staff qualifications and training requirements are governed by TWC’s Adult Education and Literacy rule §805.21, Staff Qualifications and Training at [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=805&rl=21](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=805&rl=21). These are general requirements and, for staff who oversee program testing and assessment services and for test proctoring staff, these general requirements will be further defined by the requirements of the test publisher for each test.

Additionally, test administrators and certain key staff with duties related to distance learning have specific training requirements. See the [State Guidance for Distance Learning](#) section.

In TWC rules, staff members who “oversee program assessment services” include test supervisors and test administrators, and “proctoring staff” includes test proctors. Staff may have multiple roles in the testing and assessment process or other duties. For example, an instructor may also be a test administrator or a proctor. Table 12, Overview of Professional Development Requirements for Testing and Assessment Staff, lists the PD requirements by testing or assessment function. AEL staff members with overlapping duties are expected to complete the PD hours of the position that requires the most hours and the PD content areas required of all positions.

TWC-Approved Test Trainings

A list of TWC-approved training of trainers (TOTs), test administration trainings, and refresher trainings and requirements for each of the approved tests is available at <https://tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/TWCApprovedAssessmentTrainings.htm>.

Table 12 provides an overview of the training requirements for testing supervisors and test administrators/proctors.

Table 12: Overview of Professional Development Requirements for Testing and Assessment Staff

Role and Duties	TABE Tests Training Requirements	BEST Tests Training Requirements	CASAS Tests Training Requirements
<p>Test Supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as testing subject matter expert for the AEL program • Attends initial Training of Trainer (TOT) events to develop and implement procedures • Trains staff assigned to testing duties in the AEL program or for the AEL consortium • Works with PD coordinator to ensure that program staff members are properly trained to administer test procedures • Works with the lead for performance accountability to ensure test accuracy, scoring, and reporting into TEAMS • May serve as the testing point of contact for the AEL consortia 	<p>Must complete the initial TWC-approved TOT for the TABE tests to be used in the program.</p>	<p>Must complete the initial TWC-approved TOT for the BEST tests to be used in the program.</p>	<p>Must complete the initial TWC-approved TOT for the CASAS tests to be used in the program.</p>
<p>Test Administrator/Proctor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administers tests in compliance with local procedures, test publisher, and TWC AEL guidelines, including following requirements for test security, training of staff, testing facility management, and more • Complies with scoring and TEAMS reporting policies and guidelines 	<p>Test administrators/proctors new to TABE must complete the TWC-approved training before administering the test; a refresher training must be taken every 2 years.</p>	<p>Test administrators/proctors new to BEST must complete the TWC-approved training before administering the test; a refresher training must be taken every 2 years.</p>	<p>Test administrators/proctors new to CASAS must complete the TWC-approved training before administering the test; a refresher training must be taken every 2 years.</p>

Ongoing Staff Training

Occasional modifications and enhancements to state and federal guidance related to performance accountability require program directors to ensure that all staff members associated with assessment, testing, and program performance duties attend PD training on these topics as necessary. Updates may include changes to eligibility and performance accountability, data collection processes, definitions of measures, and test administration procedures.

Programs should contact their TWC-assigned program support specialist or TCALL for current PD training options.

STATE GUIDANCE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Definition

Distance learning is formal learning activity in which participants and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials come in a variety of media, including, but not limited to, web-based programs, print, audio recordings, videos, broadcasts, computer software, and other online technology. Instructors support distance participants using methods including, but not limited to, communication via mail, phone, e-mail, and online software, and through face-to-face instruction.

Distance Learning Participant Descriptions

A **distance learner**, for federal reporting purposes, is a participant in distance education who has more proxy contact hours than direct contact hours at the end of the program year. Distance learners are reported on NRS Table IVC: Educational Gains and Attendance for Participants in Distance Education. Distance learners are a subset of participants with proxy contact hours.

A **participant with proxy contact hours** is a participant who engages in distance learning and has completed at least one proxy contact hour. A participant with proxy contact hours will not be counted as a distance learner unless the total number of proxy contact hours exceeds the total number of direct contact hours.

A **non-distance learner** is a participant who has fewer proxy contact hours than direct contact hours or no proxy hours at all.

Testing Distance Learning Participants

Participants enrolled in distance learning classes must be tested according to the same policies and procedures as participants who are not enrolled in distance learning classes, as outlined in

the Assessment Guide. All tests for distance learning participants must be administered face-to-face following the publishers' guidelines.

Posttesting

All participants engaged in distance learning courses will be posttested after the same amount of instructional time as other participants, as outlined in the Assessment Guide. Both direct contact hours and proxy contact hours are counted to calculate the amount of instructional time required before posttesting. Participants must appear in person at a proctored program site for the pretest and any subsequent posttests. Tests must be conducted through face-to-face interaction with a trained test administrator in a secure setting using only state-approved tests.

Requirement for Direct Contact Hours

Participants in distance learning must have at least 12 hours of direct contact before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Direct contact hours involve interaction between the participant and program staff in real time. Direct contact hours can be a combination of direct face-to-face contact as well as contact through phone, video, teleconference, or online communication in which the identity of the participant and the amount of time expended on the activity can be verified. Live online discussions, telephone conference calls, and live video broadcasts to remote locations are examples of direct contact hours that are countable under this definition.

Proxy Contact Hours

In addition to direct contact hours, programs may also report proxy contact hours to track time participants spend in distance learning activities. Proxy contact hours differ from direct contact hours in that the identity of the participant and/or the exact amount of time spent on a learning activity cannot always be verified. Proxy contact hours are tied to an approved curriculum for distance learning and are entered into TEAMS separately from direct contact hours. All proxy contact hours must be documented using the method described by the approved distance learning curriculum.

Distance Learning Curriculum Models

To determine a participant's proxy contact hours, a program must use an approved distance learning curriculum that employs one of the following models:

1. *Clock Time Model*: Assigns proxy contact hours based on the time that a participant is connected to or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.

Clock time model curricula electronically track the time the participant spends interacting with instructional material and stops counting idle time after a preset period of inactivity.

2. *Teacher Certification Model*: Assigns a predetermined number of proxy contact hours for each activity completed at an acceptable level of quality, as verified by the instructor.

Proxy contact hours for teacher certification model curricula are awarded based on the teacher's certification of participant's completion of assignments. Teachers may award full proxy hour credit if the assignment is completed and demonstrates competence in the teacher's professional judgment. Teachers may award half of the full proxy hour credit if the assignment is only partially completed but still demonstrates competence in the teacher's professional judgment. Assignments that do not demonstrate competence must be resubmitted by the participants to be counted for proxy hour credit.

3. *Learner Mastery Model*: Assigns a predetermined number of proxy contact hours based on learner mastery of each lesson or unit in the distance curriculum.

Proxy contact hours for learner mastery model curricula are awarded based on a passing score on a content test for a particular assignment, lesson, or unit. The passing rate is set at a minimum of 70 percent unless otherwise recommended during the curriculum approval process.

Distance Learning Provider Curriculum Approval Process

Each distance learning curriculum must be approved by TWC before implementation and before proxy contact hours can be reported. The List of Distance Learning Curricula Authorized to Enter Proxy Hours in TEAMS, with associated models used for calculating proxy contact hours, is posted on the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning's website at <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/initiatives/distcurriculum.html>.

Provider curricula for which proxy contact hours are to be calculated must first meet criteria established by TWC. Curriculum providers must certify that their products meet these criteria by submitting a document titled Certification of Distance Learning Curriculum. Additionally, distance learning curriculum providers must complete the Distance Learning Curriculum Survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DLcurriculumsurvey>. Once the certification and survey are received and accepted by TWC, the distance learning curriculum is added to the List of Distance Learning Curricula Authorized to Enter Proxy Hours in TEAMS.

Distance learning curricula that employ the clock time model must stop counting time after a specified number of idle minutes. TWC will approve the number of minutes that is allowed before the program stops counting time.

Approval for distance learning curricula that employ teacher certification and learner mastery models may require a pilot to determine recommendations for the number of proxy contact hours that can be awarded to distance learning participants.

Entering Distance Learning Classes and Hours in the Data Management System

All required NRS data elements must be recorded in TEAMS for distance learners and participants with proxy contact hours. For data to be reported on NRS Table IV or Table IVC, 12 or more direct contact hours and a test are required.

When creating a distance learning class in TEAMS, it is necessary to identify the curriculum and the model used for calculating proxy contact hours. Once identified as a distance learning class in TEAMS, participants can be assigned, and both direct contact hours and proxy contact hours can be recorded.

If curricula following the teacher certification model or learner mastery model are deployed, direct contact hours may not be counted for lessons or activities taken directly from the content of the curriculum, since total proxy contact hours are preassigned for these lessons or activities. However, any direct contact hours for activities outside the curriculum may still be counted, including registration, posttesting, and face-to-face instruction that is supplemental to the distance learning curriculum.

Reporting Instructional Hours

Providers must report all instructional hours in TEAMS. Classes that have been identified as distance learning classes in TEAMS will permit programs to record proxy contact hours and direct contact hours separately.

Distance Learning Program Plan

All AEL providers offering distance learning classes must develop and maintain a distance learning plan, which must be available for review at TWC's request. Providers may have a single plan that includes subcontractors and partner agencies, or they may oversee multiple program plans that consortium members and subcontractors develop themselves.

The distance learning plan is first developed during participation in Module 3 of the Distance Learning Academy. Program leadership must maintain the plan, with revisions as necessary, to accommodate changes in the delivery of distance courses, including the addition of new distance learning curricula, new sites, new technology, and/or new distance learning providers.

Required Training for Distance Learning Staff

In addition to the PD requirements outlined in the Staff Qualifications, Training, and Development Requirements section, Modules 1 and 3 of the Distance Learning Academy are

required for key administrative staff, teachers, and support staff members who are engaged in distance learning, including any instructor assigned to a class that reports proxy contact hours in TEAMS.

Module 1 is an introductory course that explains the state guidance for distance learning in Texas and how distance learning is tracked, documented, and entered into TEAMS. Module 1 must be completed before engaging in distance education.

Module 2 of the Distance Learning Academy is not required but is highly recommended before selecting an approved distance learning curriculum.

Module 3 covers best practices for developing and implementing a distance learning program that is specific to the needs of AEL customers. By the end of Module 3, participants will have completed either a detailed analysis of their current distance learning plan or a draft of a new plan.

DATA COLLECTION, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Guidelines for Data Collection

Procedures Related to Data Collection, PII, and Data Management

As outlined in AEL statewide grants, AEL grantees must have and implement a standard operating procedure (SOP) for customer-profiled data collection, personally identifiable information (PII), and data management. All documentation must be maintained in a participant's file for monitoring purposes.

AEL grantees must ensure that staff members who collect personal information on a customer are trained in obtaining, maintaining, and protecting PII, and that safeguards and procedures are in place to protect PII as described in WD Letter 02-18, issued April 2, 2018, and titled "Procedures and Required Documentation for Access to the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS)," and subsequent issuances. Collecting, managing, and using participant test and assessment information and associated data involves every staff member in a program; programs must provide staff development on the data management and documentation SOP to ensure that all staff members have an understanding of their related roles and responsibilities. Staff development should ensure that all staff members also have a clear understanding of what data is collected, how it is collected, how it is used, and how it must be secured and transported to comply with PII requirements.

Local SOPs should include a written, precise definition for each data item that is compatible with state definitions. More on data collection processes at federal, state, and local levels can be found in the NRS TA Guide’s chapter on Data Collection Process.¹⁴

Error Checking and Quality Control

Providers must have SOPs for checking data for completeness and accuracy following a prescribed schedule with clear deadlines and an appropriate number of staff members explicitly assigned to perform the data-checking functions. Staff members assigned to review data must review data in a timely manner for completeness and accuracy and obtain error reports from TEAMS to review immediately after data entry. To perform their jobs, staff members assigned to review data must have access to all staff—teachers, intake staff, data entry staff, and administrative staff—and the authority to obtain cooperation from these staff members, as well as access to test information and participant data.

Data Collection and Entry Requirements

Previously, TWC required all test scores to be entered into TEAMS with no more than a two-week delay between actual activity and activity reported in TEAMS. Starting with PY’19–20, TWC revised this data entry requirement to align to the data validation deadlines. Providers must ensure that the AEL program director validates data in TEAMS by the 15th of each month for activity in the previous month. For example, data for services that occur in May must be validated in TEAMS by June 15th.

Data Entry of Non–NRS-Approved Tests

Starting in PY’20, a TEAMS update will allow for entry of non–NRS-approved tests and a provisional EFL; providers must follow data entry requirements outlined in this guide for non–NRS-approved tests as those system enhancements are made.

AEL providers must adhere to the data collection and TEAMS data entry requirements and include these requirements in SOPs for data collection, PII, and data management. As tests are considered data for reporting purposes, providers must follow the data validation schedule (15th of each month for the previous month’s activities), as outlined in Table 13: AEL Data Entry Due Dates (below), for entering test scores and related data into TEAMS.

- All test scores and contact hours must be entered into TEAMS no later than the 15th of the following month for data validation purposes.
- Documentation related to assessments must be obtained and maintained in the participant’s file.
- All test scores must be dated with the exact date the test was given.
- All contact hour data must be validated monthly. For a calendar of due dates, please see Table 13: AEL Data Entry Due Dates.

¹⁴ <https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Aug2019-508.pdf>

- All participant documentation must be maintained in a secure environment as set forth in WD Letter 13-08, issued April 1, 2008, and titled “Security of Personal Identity Data,” and any subsequent issuances, and WD Letter 02-18, issued March 23, 2018, and titled “Handling and Protection of Personally Identifiable Information and Other Sensitive Information,” and any subsequent issuances. Test documentation is subject to TWC and other monitoring and AEL program review.

Data collection procedures should result in valid and reliable data if staff members understand and follow them. Therefore, part of providers’ data management and documentation SOPs must be staff training on roles and responsibilities, as well as the importance of data collection. Instructors should also have a clear understanding of not just the instruction-related aspects of testing and assessment but also of related data reporting, performance, and privacy protection requirements. Providers are responsible for providing basic TEAMS and data collection and security training for all staff.

Table 13: AEL Data Entry Due Dates

Item	Due Date
Director-level validation of data in TEAMS	The 15th of Each Month
Quarter 1 Data Sign-Off	October 15
Quarter 2 Data Sign-Off	January 15
Quarter 3 Data Sign-Off	April 15
Quarter 4 and Final Data Sign-Off	July 15

Analysis of Data for Program Monitoring and Improvement

For program monitoring and improvement, program staff must look at participant outcomes and demographics with consideration of such variables as the number of instructional hours received, length of enrollment, the instructors and classes enrolled, and participant educational functioning level. This type of analysis is available in TEAMS through a variety of reports.

Grant recipient directors must identify at least one individual who is responsible for reviewing monthly data to identify programmatic and performance issues. This individual should work with the grant recipient director and the PD coordinator to develop strategies for addressing performance issues.

Access to State Data Management Information System

In Texas, grantees are required to track data, including test results, and enter this data into TEAMS.

To support program performance, program directors may assign read-only access to teachers and non–data entry staff in TEAMS. All teachers are required to have access to TEAMS or regular and direct access to TEAMS data.

Directors also must ensure that all staff has initial and ongoing training to use TEAMS. All TEAMS users must have training before using the system.

Information on getting access to TEAMS can be found on the TWC AEL web page at <https://twc.texas.gov/files/partners/instruction-for-accessing-teams-twc.pdf>.

Test Score Reports

Original score sheets from tests and/or electronic score reports with results of participants' pretest and posttest scores must be stored and/or backed up on appropriate media or printed out and filed in hard copy for local, state, and federal auditing purposes.

MONITORING OF TESTING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Providers are required to comply with guidance in the Assessment Guide and must be aware that TWC's Subrecipient Monitoring (SRM) department may request SOPs related to assessment and testing and placement, documentation of tests provided to individuals, and interviews with staff members who administer tests.

SRM may review a provider's compliance with the following elements related to assessment and testing. While this is not an all-inclusive list of what SRM or other local, state, and federal auditing entities may review, it summarizes main elements as outlined in the Assessment Guide.

- Written SOPs related to comprehensive assessment, testing, and placement
- Written SOPs on customer profile data collection, PII, and data management
- Test score data and its entry into TEAMS within the monthly data validation window (that is, test score data entered into TEAMS no later than the 15th of the following month for data validation purposes)
- Completion of all required TWC training requirements and professional development qualifications by test administration staff
- General test administration requirements, including test security and scoring procedures, as required by the Assessment Guide and the test publishers
- Distance learning plan
- Pretesting an individual for eligibility
- Posttesting a participant following the publisher's guidelines and following the 150–calendar day validity of a test across program years
- Adherence to the one content area test sequence requirements
- Documentation in the participant file, including the following, as applicable:

- Original test locators, appraisals, and/or standardized literacy screening tools
- Original paper-based score sheets
- Documentation of test booklets, cover sheets, and/or answer sheets with the form number, test date, and participant name (See the [Documentation of TABE](#), [Documentation of BEST](#), and [Documentation of CASAS](#) sections.)

Justifications for early or late testing

- Test scores and dates of each content area completed entered into TEAMS exactly as they occurred
- Hand-scoring of paper-based tests in ink and not pencil
- Usage of test administration materials as published by the test publisher, and not locally developed materials

APPENDIX A: PY'20–21 ASSESSMENT GUIDE REVISIONS OVERVIEW

The following table shows a list of major changes to assessment policy starting July 1, 2020.

Topic	PY'18–19 Assessment Guidance	PY'20–21 Assessment Guidance
Allowed Tests	<p>GAIN and TABE 9/10 allowed for use through June 30, 2018; not allowed as a pretest after December 31, 2018.</p> <p><i>Additional Reference:</i> (AEL Letter 07-18, Suitable Tests for Use in AEL)</p>	<p>Participants who enroll in services must be given a pretest with an NRS-approved test for PY'20–'21 (CASAS, TABE 11/12, TABE CLAS-E, BEST Plus 2.0, BEST Literacy). New flexibilities provided by OCTAE for administration of non–NRS-approved tests are allowed starting in PY'20, and providers must follow the guidance for administration of non–NRS-approved tests and remote testing outlined in AEL Letter 03-20, “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy,” at https://twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/ael-03-20-remote-testing-twc.pdf.</p>
Testing in Content Areas	<p>Programs must administer all content areas of an approved assessment, unless there’s an exemption to doing so in the participant’s file.</p>	<p>Providers will have a new option to test in just one content area to determine eligibility, enroll the participant in a class, then stagger delivery of remaining tests in the test series (for example reading, writing, math) after the start of services while earning contact hours.</p> <p>Testing in the remaining content areas must be completed within the first 12 contact hours or within five class days of direct instruction.</p> <p>Providers are still required to maintain any exemptions from testing in all content areas in the participant’s file.</p>

Topic	PY'18–19 Assessment Guidance	PY'20–21 Assessment Guidance
Baseline Test in New PY	Providers could bring forward tests that were up to a year old to be used as a baseline test in the new program year, regardless of exit, in TEAMS.	<p>Only tests less than 150 calendar days old can be brought forward to act as the pretest in the program year when there is a continuous period of participation (POP) that crosses program years.</p> <p>A TEAMS fall 2019 release will program the 150-calendar-day test validity policy. Providers will see a message when a participant has a test older than 150 calendar days.</p>
EFL Gains	A baseline pretest score was established, and all tests after were measured against the baseline content areas to determine EFL gain.	<p>All tests within the program year are measured against the previous tests to see if at least one test in any content area is a gain.</p> <p>TEAMS 4.4 release ensured that any EFL gains made in a program year count, so a gain cannot be unearned.</p>
Provisional EFL	No guidance	PY'20 TEAMS modifications will allow students without an NRS-approved test to be entered into TEAMS, based on a locally determined provisional EFL, in order to enter class contact time. When TEAMS enhancements allow for this option, grantees will be required to enter all class contact time for any student receiving AEL services.
Exiters	Exit is calculated at 90 days without contact hours (direct, proxy, or training).	<p>Exit is still calculated at 90 days without contact hours (direct, proxy, or training).</p> <p>All exiters returning to AEL services are required to take a pretest to determine eligibility before being registered in a class.</p>

Topic	PY'18–19 Assessment Guidance	PY'20–21 Assessment Guidance
		TEAMS will calculate exit and require that all exiters be given a new eligibility test/pretest.
Posttest Rate	No Guidance	<p>TWC AEL is introducing two rates related to MSG performance: Participation Rate and Posttest Rate.</p> <p>The participation rate is the percentage of overall participants who achieve enough hours to posttest calculated by the unique hour requirements of each test.</p> <p>The posttest rate is the percentage of participants who reach the minimum hours to test, based on the test publisher's guidelines and who takes a posttest. The measure is calculated by the unique hour requirements of each test.</p> <p>While programs are not required to meet these rates beginning July 1, 2020, programs must be aware that TWC may implement a future requirement for programs to meet these measures and/or may include these measures as part of performance-based funding criteria. TWC will notify programs of any requirements via AEL Letters or other TWC guidance.</p>

Topic	PY'18–19 Assessment Guidance	PY'20–21 Assessment Guidance
Data Entry	All data was collected and entered at a minimum biweekly, with no more than two weeks between actual activity and activity reported in TEAMS.	All test scores and contact hours must be entered into TEAMS no later than the 15th day of the following month for data validation purposes. Non–NRS-approved tests must also be entered into TEAMS as these PY'20 TEAMS enhancements are made.
Test Administration Training Requirements	Guidance on test administrator training varied across tests for staff administering the tests.	Guidance further clarifies that programs must ensure test supervisors and test administrators/proctors attend TWC-approved trainings listed at https://tcall.tamu.edu/twcael/TWCApprovedAssessmentTrainings.htm .
Monitoring	Original score sheets from tests and/or electronic score reports with results of participants' pretest and posttest scores must be stored and/or backed up on appropriate media or printed out and filed in hard copy for local, state, and federal auditing purposes.	New section, Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities , provides a list of items SRM may review.
Literacy Screening Tool	Use of a literacy screening tool instead of the BEST Literacy test tool was optional, and guidance on tool administration, scoring, and file retention was vague.	Providers must administer both the BEST Plus 2.0 and a literacy screening tool (either the BEST Literacy test tool or a locally developed standardized literacy screening tool) to all individuals to ensure effective assessment of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. A Standardized Literacy Screen Tool Example is provided.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF REVISIONS

This lists all the revisions made from the previously published version of the draft Assessment Guide, published May 28, 2020.

Section	Revision
Cover page	Updated note to state revisions in the guide reference AEL Letter 03-20 and OCTAE’s approval of the revised assessment guide on July 16, 2020
Primary Resources	Added OCTAE Program Memorandum 20-5
Other Resources	Added AEL Letter 03-20, issued July 7, 2020, and titled “Remote Testing and Performance in Adult Education and Literacy” (referenced throughout the guide revision)
Brief Overview of WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance	Added clarification on how an HSE credential is measured in the Credential Attainment Indicator
Identifying the Planned MSG	Deleted extraneous language on which MSG may be best for a participant to earn
Posttest Rate Measure	Revised when posttests must be given, based on appropriate number of instructional hours, and deleted “final contact hour related to the test”
Section Added: Initial EFL Placement	Added this section, as required by OCTAE, to describe how an individual is placed into an EFL
Pretests for English Language Learners	Changed “test” to “assessment” in second bullet. Deleted bullet that stated how a TSIA score showing deficiency in a content area and that indicates that participant is an ELL is an example of English proficiency determination

Section	Revision
Content Testing Requirements and New Flexibilities	Changed section title (previously titled “Testing Requirements and New Flexibility”)
Section Added: Program Year 2020 – 2021 Flexibilities & Waivers	Added this section to describe NRS testing exemptions and waivers for PY’20–21, as noted in AEL Letter 03-20
Figure 2: Retesting in New Program Year	Changed PY ’20–’21 to more general PY 1 and PY 2.
Recommended: Timely Posttesting within 150 Calendar Days	Changed “locally developed tests” to “non-NRS-approved tests,” referenced AEL Letter 03-20, and added list of tests that must be recorded in TEAMS and participant file
Figure 3: Posttesting within 150 Calendar Days	Updated image to show PY’20–’21
Initial Testing in One Content Area Flexibility	Changed section title (previously titled “Testing in One Content Area Flexibility”)
Staggered Pretests Means Staggered Posttests	Added clarification that posttest results may be pulled into a new PY to be used to determine student’s instructional needs
General Test Administration Requirements	Added sentence to say that providers must ensure that remote testing administration aligns to test publisher’s guidelines
Overview of Tests Permitted for Use in Texas	Added reference to AEL Letter 03-20 Added computer-based delivery format to the TABE CLAS-E
Section Added: Administering Remote Testing	Added section to reference AEL Letter 03-20 for remote testing guidance

Section	Revision
Table 2: Test Publishers' Recommended Hours between Tests	For CASAS, deleted 70 hours with alternate forms and added range of 70 to 100 hours for recommendation
Testing Before the Required Minimum Hours of Instruction	Updated third bullet to state that a participant must be determined to be test ready Revised fourth bullet to state that reduced instructional time is due to the employer objective for a workplace literacy class
Section Added: Documentation of TABE Tests	Added section to state that the TABE test answer sheet must be maintained in the participant file and, if administered, the TABE Level L test booklet as well
Section Added: Documentation of BEST Tests	Added section to state that BEST Literacy test booklets, cover sheets, and answer sheets, as well as the BEST 2.0 answer sheet, must be maintained after administration
Section Added: Documentation of CASAS Tests	Added section to state that CASAS answer sheets must be maintained, and, if administered, the Form 27 Literacy test book as well
Table 12: Overview of Professional Development Requirements for Testing and Assessment Staff	Deleted "refresher TOT" as requirement for Test Supervisor Deleted requirement that test supervisors must attend refresher trainings every two years
Section Added: Data Entry of Non-NRS Approved Tests	Added section to state that TEAMS will be updated to allow entry of non-NRS tests
Data Collection and Entry Requirements	Clarified that contact hours must be entered by the data validation deadline
Monitoring of Testing and Related Activities	In list of documentation in participant file, replaced "complete original test booklet cover sheet" with new bullet on "documentation of test booklets, cover sheets, and/or answer sheets"

Section	Revision
	Deleted sentences on test booklets not necessary for record retention and maintenance of locally developed tests recommended, but not required, in participant file
Appendix A: Allowed Tests	Removed reference to GAIN and TABE 9/10 Added reference to AEL 03-20 Deleted reference to CASAS in TEAMS
Appendix A: Provisional EFL	Added appendix to state that locally determined provisional EFLs will be allowed to be entered into TEAMS
Appendix A: Data Entry	Added to clarify that contact hours and non-NRS-approved tests must be entered into TEAMS by data validation deadline