

2024-25 State Assessment Policy

Submitted to:

**OCTAE**

By:

**Office of Adult Education Initiatives**

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# Setting the Context

## Introduction

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), requires the Colorado Department of Education to establish and monitor accountability within its local adult education programs. Accountability procedures must be in accordance with the National Reporting System (NRS), which serves as the accountability system for AEFLA. To fulfill its monitoring requirements, AEFLA requires each state to have a written assessment policy that its local eligible providers must follow in measuring educational gain and reporting data in the National Reporting System (NRS). The assessment policy must be approved by the Secretary of Education (34 CFR §§ 462.4 (a)).

## Use and Purpose

This assessment policy applies to all grantees receiving AEFLA and/or Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) funds. Learners who are active participants, as defined by §462.40, and are receiving adult education, family literacy, workplace literacy, and/or English language instruction using these funds must be administered assessments according to this policy.

**Note:** *The Colorado Assessment Policy also applies to grantees receiving state Adult Education and Literacy Act (AELA) funds that have selected Educational Functioning Level gains as an Outcome and are therefore required to implement NRS-assessments. Alternative placement assessments do not apply to AELA grantees. AELA grantees should not report alternative placement assessments in LACES and should continue to enroll learners who are not NRS tested into AELA workshops in LACES.*

The state assessment policy is enacted to ensure assessments administered at the local program level are valid (measuring what is intended to be measured), and reliable (yielding consistent results). The policy ensures assessments are administered in a standardized and consistent way to all learners in the state of Colorado. When test procedures are not followed correctly or consistently, the validity is lost, and comparability is compromised.

To ensure the assessment policy is being implemented fully, the Office of Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) will:

* Provide the state assessment policy to all grantees reporting to the AEI office;
* Provide training on the state assessment policy, NRS testing policies, accountability policies, and data collection process to local Assessment Coordinators and program leadership
* Offer technical assistance that provides an overview of the assessment policy and showcases changes at the beginning of the program year;
* Deliver training on the administration of assessments;
* Monitor grantees’ implementation and administration of the assessment policy through calls, site visits, and data quality checks. Based on results, appropriate additions may be made to individual grantees’ technical assistance plans; and
* Maintain records of local program staff trained to administer test in each of the approved assessments.

The grantees administering NRS-approved assessments will:

* Adhere to state policy and guidance[[1]](#footnote-2);
* Create and implement local assessment procedures based on the state assessment policy, test publishers’ guidelines, and assessment training;
* Ensure all staff administering assessments have completed required test administrator training;
* Monitor program staff in accordance with state policy and assessment publisher guidelines;
* Maintain records in the state data system of staff trained to administer assessments; and
* Provide equitable assessment opportunities for all learners.

This policy details the following:

* how educational gain is measured;
* which assessments are approved in Colorado;
* pre- and post-test requirements;
* remote testing implementation;
* state performance targets;
* certified trainer and administrator training requirements;
* guidance on materials inventory and destruction;
* requirements for assessing learners with accommodations;
* data entry requirements; and
* additional tools and resources for assessment informed instruction.

The purpose of the Assessment Policy is to outline for Adult Education providers in Colorado the processes for effectively implementing NRS-approved assessments, based on the type of assessment used at the local level. Additionally, the policy serves to describe assessment reporting requirements of AEFLA. It is not intended to be an exhaustive description of all reporting requirements of the grant.

This policy **encourages informed and effective instruction**, **ensures educational progress is consistently tracked**, and assures testing and security protocols are consistent for comparability and quality and that state level outcome data are accurate. Grantees referencing this policy should consider complementing documents in their decision making, such as the assurances, other policies, and the [NRS Technical Assistance Guide](https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Mar2021-508.pdf).

# Demonstrating Measurable Skill Gains through Assessment

Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) demonstrated by assessments are defined by the NRS through achievement of an Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gain between a pre- and post-test during a Period of Participation (PoP) or a program year. To help ensure the comparability of measures across states and the integrity of the data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education and Congress, regulations on measuring educational gain through pre- and post-testing are issued by the Secretary of Education (34 CFR §§462.42 and §§462.43 Subpart D). The regulations codify the requirements states and local providers must meet when measuring educational gain and are incorporated in this assessment policy.

In order to demonstrate MSG through pre- and post-tests, learners must be administered a test which meets the following requirements:

* that the Secretary deems suitable for use in the NRS;
* that AEI has identified in this assessment policy;
* that is administered in accordance to the instructional hours requirements; and
* that is administered with accommodations set forth in publisher guidelines and in this policy (see the [Accommodating Learners with Disabilities](#_heading=h.1ci93xb) section).

Achievement of an EFL gain is measured by comparing the learner’s initial EFL(s) in each of the pre-tests the learner takes with the learner’s EFL(s) from the corresponding, subsequent post-test(s). The results provide evidence of learner skills acquisition from instruction. A learner makes an educational gain when their post-test in any subject area results in one or more EFLs above the level at which they were pre-tested in the same subject area.

## Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs)

EFLs have been determined by the National Reporting System. The EFLs are broken down in Tables 1A and 1B below. Although the Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) of each ABE/ASE EFL is available and listed, these are for skills reference only and should not be used to assign learners a grade level. The NRS does not publish GLEs for ESL learners. (See the [Approved Assessments section](#_heading=h.3dy6vkm) for a breakdown of EFLs as they relate to approved assessments and placing learners within an EFL.)

**TABLE 1A: Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)**

| **EFL** | **Grade Level Equivalent (GLE)** |
| --- | --- |
| Beginning ABE Literacy Level 1 | 0-1 |
| Beginning Basic Education Level 2 | 2-3 |
| Low Intermediate Basic EducationLevel 3 | 4-5 |
| Intermediate Basic EducationLevel 4 | 6-8 |
| Low Adult Secondary Education Level 5  | 9-10 |
| High Adult Secondary Education Level 6  | 11-12 |

**TABLE 1B: English as a Second Language (ESL)**

| **EFL** |
| --- |
| Beginning ESL LiteracyLevel 1 |
| Low Beginning ESL Level 2 |
| High Beginning ESL Level 3 |
| Low Intermediate ESL Level 4 |
| High Intermediate ESL Level 5 |
| Advanced ESL Level 6 |

# Approved Assessments

The assessments listed in Table 2 have been approved for use in Colorado to measure MSG by pre- and post-testing. These tests have been deemed suitable for use in NRS by the Secretary of Education in the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/09/23/2022-20684/tests-determined-to-be-suitable-for-use-in-the-national-reporting-system-for-adult-education). These assessments are appropriate for measuring literacy, language, and numeracy development of adult learners; provide standardized administration and scoring procedures; provide alternate equivalent forms for post-testing; and can be linked to EFLs.

AEI has identified on Table 3 assessment series for learners’ alternative placement. The assessments listed in Table 3 have **not** been approved for Educational Functioning Level assignment nor to measure MSG by pre- and post-testing. AEI has listed these tests as alternatives for learner placement into programming, specifically placement in classes for preparation to enter post-secondary education (college readiness), High School Diploma or Equivalency fast-track classes, or Workplace Literacy (WPL).

**Note:** No high school equivalency practice tests or high school equivalency tests are approved NRS assessments. Therefore, they cannot be used to place learners into EFLs or to show pre- and post-test gains. Table 2 lists the approved assessments by content area and expiration date.

**TABLE 2: Approved Assessments**

| **Assessment** | **Approved Forms** | **Educational Level** | **Approved Through (Federal Register)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CASAS Reading GOALS**  | **Paper and computer-based pair forms:** 901/902R(A), 903/904R(B), 905/906R(C), 907/908R(D) | ABE, ASE | 2/5/2025*Sunset Period 6/30/2025* |
| **CASAS Math GOALS 2**  | **Paper and computer-based pair forms:** 921/922M(A), 923/924M(B), 925/926M(C), 927/928M(D), 929/930M(E) | ABE, ASE | 7/13/2030 |
| **TABE 11&12 (Reading, Language and Math)** | **Paper and computer-based pair forms:**  11/12L, 11/12E, 11/12M, 11/12D, 11/12A | ABE, ASE | 9/7/2024*Sunset period: 6/30/2025* |
| **CASAS Reading STEPS**  | **Paper and computer-based pair forms:** 621/622R(A), 623/624R(B), 625/626R(C), 627/628R(D), 629/630R(E) | ESL | 7/13/2030 |
| **CASAS Listening STEPS** | **Paper and computer-based pair forms:** 621/622L(A), 623/624L(B), 625/626L(C), 627/628L(D), 629/360L(E) | ESL | 7/13/2030 |
| **BEST Plus 3.0** | **Paper:** Forms 1 and 2. **Computer-based pair forms:** 1 with adaptive part A and 2 with fixed form part B.  | Paper forms: ESL 1-4Computer forms: ESL 1-6 | 7/13/2030 |
| **ACT WorkKeys Applied Math** | **Paper and computer-based forms:** 014, 015, 016, and 017 | IET or Workplace Literacy ABE, ASE | 7/1/2026 |
| **WorkKeys Workplace Documents** | **Paper and computer-based forms**: 018, 019, 020, and 021 | IET or Workplace Literacy ABE L2-4, ASE | 7/1/2026 |

**TABLE 3: Approved Assessments for Alternative Placement**

| **Assessment** | **Program Type** | **Affiliated LACES Goals** | **Placement**  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Employer identified assessment** | ABE, ASE or ESL | Earn industry recognized credential or Achieve work-based project learning goal | Workplace Literacy |
| **Accuplacer** | ABE, ASE or ESL | Place in postsecondary education or training | College Readiness |
| **High School Equivalency Official Practice Test** | ABE, ASE or ESL | Earn secondary diploma or equivalent | High School Equivalency fast track program |

**BEST Plus 3.0**

BEST Plus 3.0 is intended to assess interpersonal communication using everyday language used in practical situations such as work, life and community. In this face-to-face oral interview assessment, learners respond to a series of pre-selected questions appropriate for the examinee. Each test begins with a brief set of warm-up or locator questions delivered and scored by a trained Test Administrator to determine subsequent test questions and final score. Test Administrators must complete a three-day virtual training lead by CAL to administer BEST Plus 3.0.

**CASAS**

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) offers four and five levels of assessments (A, B, C, D) that align to the NRS ABE/ASE (GOALS) and ESL (Life and Work) EFLs. To determine which level is most appropriate to use for pre-testing the learner, learners must first complete the corresponding CASAS Locator or Appraisal with the test series the program is administering (i.e., STEPS or GOALS). Tables provided by CASAS for paper-based tests are then used to identify which level of pre-test to administer to a learner based on the score of the Locator/Appraisal. If using CASAS eTests, the online Appraisal will automatically select the correct pre-test level for the learner. Any CASAS STEPS pre-test which results in the EFL “Completed ESL L6” cannot be used for EFL placement, and the learners must be re-tested on an ABE assessment.

**TABE**

Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are published in five levels (L, E, M, D, A) that correspond to NRS EFLs for ABE and ASE. To determine which assessment is most appropriate for pre-testing the learner, the grantee must first administer the TABE Locator. Using the TABE paper-based Locator Test Cut-Scores table, the grantee will be able to determine which level of the pre-test the learner will take. If using TABE Online, the online locator will automatically select the correct pre-test for the learner.

**ACT WorkKeys**

ACT WorkKeys Applied Mathematics measures critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving techniques for situations that actually occur in today’s workplace. ACT WorkKeys Workplace Documents measures skills that individuals use when they read real workplace documents and use that information to make job-related decisions and solve problems. Each assessment includes four forms which align to NRS EFLs for ABE and ASE. Note: Workplace Documents does not measure knowledge and skills at ABE L1. There is no locator/appraisal for the WorkKeys tests. Learners will begin with the first form in either subject area before progressing to the next.

Only AEI-approved assessments and forms outlined in this policy may be used for pre- and post-testing to place learners into EFLs for instructional and reporting purposes. When new NRS tests and form(s) become available and/or assessment instruments are retired from the approved list, AEI will update the assessment policy, announce the change to grantees, and update the content of professional development training accordingly. Please see the [Upcoming Assessment Transitions](#_heading=h.woip65jltemp) section below for transitions occurring in the 24-25 program year.

Grantees must always follow test administration practices and assessment publisher guidelines when administering these tests. Assessments being utilized for NRS reporting purposes cannot be used more frequently than within instructional hour windows prescribed by test publishers (see [Pre- and Post-Test Requirements section)](#_heading=h.1t3h5sf). Grantees are also encouraged to utilize formative, instructional-based assessments between pre- and post-testing to evaluate learner progress in addition to these NRS approved assessments.

## Assessment Transitions

NRS approved assessments are published by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) through the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/07/13/2023-14825/tests-determined-to-be-suitable-for-use-in-the-national-reporting-system-for-adult-education#h-2). After designated periods of approval, assessments expire, and it is common for publishers to submit updated or new series for approval. Although uncommon, approval of any assessment may be revoked through the Federal Register, before expiring.

In the program year 24-25 TABE 11/12 and CASAS Reading GOALS are expected to expire, on Sept. 7, 2024, and Feb. 5, 2025 respectively. Both tests have a federally allowable sunset period of 6/30/2025. Once new test series are available, grantees must ensure that learners previously tested in expiring series have a valid post-test in that expiring series before transitioning learners to the new tests. Expired testing series from the prior year are not eligible for use in program year 24-25, continuing learners must have a valid pre-test from a series in Table 2.

# Pre- and Post-Test Requirements

## Placement Requirements

For Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) by EFL gain reporting purposes, all learners must be placed in an initial Educational Functioning Level (EFL). Exceptions to initial EFL placement are covered in the Alternative Placements section of this policy. To do so, all learners are pre-tested at intake and each new Period of Participation (PoP). The pre-test scale score will determine the learner’s initial EFL. Pre-tests must occur, or be pushed forward, prior to instruction taking place. Grantees are not required to assess learners in all subject areas but must pre-test learners in the subject areas in which they receive instruction. This may be speaking/listening, reading, language, or math.

Pre-tests may be administered face-to-face or remotely between the test administrator and the learner following test publisher guidelines. All pre-tests, with the exception of ACT WorkKeys, must have an accompanying appraisal or locator, these do not determine EFL placement, rather they indicate the appropriate test level in the series to measure learner skills.

Grantees must report all NRS assessments a learner takes in the statewide data reporting system, LACES. If multiple subject areas are assessed through pre-testing and the learner has different EFLs in different subject areas, LACES will automatically select the earliest test with the lowest EFL for placement on the NRS tables. Grantees may manually select which of those subject areas will be used for EFL placement after 12 hours of instruction are recorded for the learner in the data system. For detailed instructions on how to select a learner’s subject area please review the [LACES Data Dictionary](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/grantees/laces-data-dictionary/pre-testing-and-entry-efl).

The subject area selected will determine the learner’s placement for initial EFL reporting purposes on NRS Tables but does not impact gains measured by post-test level increase in other subject areas. Post-test gains made by a participant in any subject area will count once per program year. Once the learner’s initial EFL for the program year is established, it should not be changed.

## Alternative Placements

AEI has approved alternative placement methods for learners whose goals and enrollment needs are better met by other types of assessments. Learners placed alternatively must have goals related to entering higher education, obtaining a credential, completing a work-based learning project, or obtain a high school diploma or equivalent reported in their record (please see data assurances for details).

Learners who are placed into programming using one of the alternative assessments in Table 3 will be placed into either an ABE Alternative Placement or ESL Alternative Placement row on NRS Table 4. When adding the alternative placement assessment record in LACES, users will select if the alternative placement is for ABE or ESL. Additionally, users will assign the alternative placement assessment a scale score between 1-6. The scale score selection will populate an ABE or ESL level for alternative placement assessment being added. The scale score selection 1-6 will correspond to a test level of ABE 1-6 or ESL 1-6. For example, a scale score on an ABE alternative placement assessment of “1” will generate a level of ABE L1 for that alternative placement assessment record in LACES, and a scale score of “4” on an ESL alternative placement assessment will generate a level of ESL L4 for that alternative placement assessment record in LACES.

For learners to be eligible for an alternative placement method, they must enroll in one of the following service types that has been approved by the AEI Office:

* College Readiness program
* High School Equivalency Diploma Fast Track program
* Workplace Literacy program
* Integrated Education and Training program

Learners may move from a program type using NRS pre- and post-testing into a program type using an alternative placement assessment; however, such a learner must be NRS post-tested, if eligible, before transitioning to a program type using an alternative placement assessment.

## Tests Administered by Another Entity

AEI allows local grantees to accept NRS assessment scores administered by other entities, especially WIOA partners such as corrections, workforce centers, division of vocational rehabilitation, and other Adult Education service providers, to support collaborative efforts and avoid over-testing. Tests administered by other entities may only be accepted by a local grantee if:

* The test is an approved assessment listed in the state assessment policy;
* The administrator meets test administrator requirements outlined in this policy when the assessment was delivered;
* The learner was given a locator/appraisal prior to pre-testing; and
* All test procedures, e.g., time limits, accommodations, etc., have been followed.

AEI encourages local adult education grantees to meet with WIOA and community partners to determine how to most effectively offer assessment services to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and over-testing.

## Converting Scale Scores into EFLs

Grantees must use NRS test administration materials to convert raw test scores (the total number of questions answered correctly) to scale scores (the adjusted score based on number of questions answered correctly and the difficulty of the test level). Only the scale scores are reported in LACES to assign the respective EFL. Please see the [Data Entry and Quality Control section](#_Data_Entry_and) for more information on automated test ingests. Tables 4 and 5 are used by LACES to assign learners an EFL in their assessed subject areas and to determine future EFL gains.

Learners must be placed into classes and receive instruction that aligns with their scale score and EFL for each subject area, which could be at different levels. Grantees may use additional evidence for class placement, to complement official NRS test scores, and must indicate so in their local Assessment Assurances if choosing to do so. Additional evidence for local class placement may include but is not limited to non NRS assessments, recent class records, transcripts, learner goals, etc.

Initial pre-test scores are only valid for NRS reporting in a program year or PoP if administered within 90 days prior to a learner’s first attendance hours. The same is true for alternative placement assessments. The scores remain valid for class placement as long as a learner is continuously enrolled in and attending classes until the start of the new program year. In the new program, if a learner’s most recent test score occurred within 90 days of their first date of attendance in the new program year, it may be used for placement in classes in the new program year. Such test should be pushed forward into the new program year in LACES but may not include tests resulting in a level of “Completed ESL L6” as such tests cannot be used for placement. Additionally, the AEI Office recommends following test publisher guidance for re-testing when scores fall outside the reliable range rather than pushing such tests forward into a new program year.

For prior year tests administered more than 90 days before a learner is scheduled to begin classes in the new program year, if the grantee has evidence, such as through appraisals/locators, intake information, or other data points, that a learner’s initial scores and EFL placement have not changed, they may request a test push forward override from the AEI Office.

ESL learners’ pre-test scores resulting in “Completed ESL Level 6” must be pre-tested again on an NRS approved ABE/ASE assessment before being placed into classes and receiving instruction. Learners who pre-test at ABE Level 6 do not need to be post-tested and will need to set goals to demonstrate measurable skill gains through one of the other types of MSG approved by the [NRS](https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/f2f-training/accessible/2-defining-key-elements-nrs-reporting) and the AEI Office.

**TABLE 4: Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CASAS Scale Score** | **Educational Functioning Level** |
| Reading GOALS: 0-203Math GOALS 2: 0-192 | ABE Level 1 |
| Reading GOALS: 204-216Math GOALS 2: 193-203 | ABE Level 2  |
| Reading GOALS: 217-227Math GOALS 2: 204-2013 | ABE Level 3 |
| Reading GOALS: 228-238Math GOALS 2: 214-224 | ABE Level 4 |
| Reading GOALS: 239-248Math GOALS 2: 225-235  | ABE Level 5 |
| Reading: 249+Math GOALS 2: 236+ | ABE Level 6 |
| **TABE 11/12 Scale Score** | **Educational Functioning Level** |
| Reading: 300-441Math: 300-448Language: 300-457 | ABE Level 1 |
| Reading: 442-500Math: 449-495Language: 458-510 | ABE Level 2 |
| Reading: 501-535Math: 496-536Language: 511-546 | ABE Level 3 |
| Reading: 536-575Math: 537-595Language: 547-583 | ABE Level 4 |
| Reading: 576-616Math: 596-656Language: 584-630 | ABE Level 5 |
| Reading: 617-800Math: 657-800Language: 631-800 | ABE Level 6 |
| **ACT WorkKeys Scale Scores** | **Educational Functioning Level**  |
| Applied Math: 71-73Workplace Documents: N/A | ABE L1 |
| Applied Math: 74-78Workplace Documents: 73-74 | ABE L2 |
| Applied Math: 79-82Workplace Documents: 75-77 | ABE L3 |
| Applied Math: 83-85Workplace Documents: 78-80 | ABE L4 |
| Applied Math: 86-87Workplace Documents: 81-82 | ABE L5 |
| Applied Math: 88-90Workplace Documents: 83-90 | ABE L6 |

**TABLE 5: English Language Acquisition**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CASAS STEPS Scale Scores** | **Educational Functioning Level** |
| Reading: 0-183Listening: 0-181 | ESL Level 1 |
| Reading: 184-196Listening: 182-191 | ESL Level 2 |
| Reading: 197-206Listening: 192-201 | ESL Level 3 |
| Reading: 207-216Listening: 202-211 | ESL Level 4 |
| Reading: 217-227Listening: 212-221 | ESL Level 5 |
| Reading: 228-238Listening: 222-231 | ESL Level 6 |
| **BEST Plus 3.0**  | **Educational Functioning Level** |
| 600 – 677 | ESL Level 1 |
| 678-702 | ESL Level 2 |
| 703-726 | ESL Level 3 |
| 727-752 | ESL Level 4 |
| 753-785 | ESL Level 5[[2]](#footnote-3) |
| 786-849 | ESL Level 62 |

## Post-Testing

NRS Post-tests are administered to track progress and determine when an educational gain is achieved. Post-tests may be administered face-to-face or remotely between the test administrator and the learner per test publisher guidelines. Post-testing should be administered on the alternate form at the same level following test publisher series sequence unless otherwise indicated in test publisher guidance. As described in test publisher guidance, this includes when a learner’s pre-test score or latest test score is high enough to advance to the next level test when a post-test gain is no longer possible on the alternate form at the same level. When post-testing, a learner’s scale score may fall outside the reliable range. In these instances, the AEI Office encourages grantees to follow test publisher re-testing guidance for a more reliable score. In instances where re-testing is not possible, grantees may request an out of range score override from the AEI Office.

Programs intending to assess learners with more than one NRS assessment will need to make sure that learners have a valid pre-test/post-test combination on the same assessment type and in any subject area in which they meet post-testing instructional hour requirements.Only instructional hours in a subject area corresponding to the subject area of the NRS assessment count toward post-test eligibility in that assessment. Class schedules using NRS assessments must be developed so it is feasible for the majority of learners attending regularly to reach the required instructional hours and be able to post-test.

Grantees must post-test learners in all subject areas in which they are receiving instruction when they become post-test eligible. Grantees must continue post-testing learners after their first post-test, as long as the program continues providing the learner instruction in that subject area, including after a learner makes an initial EFL gain in that subject area.

Grantees must post-test at least 60% of all WIOA Title II participants annually. The 60% target for post-testing learners does not include learners who have pre-tested into ABE Level 6 unless they have tested at a lower EFL in a different subject area and does not include learners placed using an alternative placement assessment. These learners will demonstrate measurable skill gains through one of the other types of MSG approved by the [NRS](https://nrsweb.org/training-ta/f2f-training/accessible/2-defining-key-elements-nrs-reporting) and the AEI Office.

ESL learners who post-test into “Completed ESL Level 6” do not require further post-testing with an NRS approved ESL assessment, and instead should be re-tested using an NRS approved ABE/ASE assessment to continue instruction in that subject area.

Learners who have earn a secondary school diploma or equivalent within the program year in which they enrolled, may, but are not required to, post-test after earning their diploma regardless of their initial EFL, as this demonstrates a different type of Measurable Skill Gain. Please note, AELA learners, unlike AEFLA, who are measured on different types of outcomes, may report both a secondary school diploma or equivalent and a post-test EFL gain outcome during the same program year.

## Instructional Hour Requirements

Learners are eligible to NRS post-test when they complete the test publisher’s minimum number of instructional hours. Table 6 below provides a breakdown of required instructional hours before post-testing on each NRS assessment. Research conducted by the publishers of the approved assessments indicates that learners need at least the identified recommended hours of instructional time to show a gain. Learners should not be tested in NRS-approved assessments at random or excessively in order to maintain the integrity of the test and avoid practice effects.

Grantees may choose to employ instructional hour requirements greater than the vendor required minimums for some or all their learners, if the grantee has evidence that those learners would benefit from more instructional hours to show level gain. When determining whether to set a greater number of hours than the minimum required for post-testing, consider the following: initial EFL placements, test publisher’s recommended number of instructional hours, internal learner persistence rates, available class hours, and points between EFLs. Grantees may not set instructional hour requirements greater than the maximum recommended by the vendor. These instructional hour requirements must be documented in the grantee’s local Assessment Assurances.

**TABLE 6: Instructional Hour Requirements**

| **Assessment** | **Recommended Instructional Hours (Per Content Area)** | **Minimum Required Instructional Hours (Per Content Area** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TABE 11/12ABE EFL 1-4 | 50-60 hours | 40 hours |
| TABE 11/12ABE EFL 5-6 | 50-60 hours | 30 hours |
| CASAS GOALS and STEPS Series | 70-100 hours | 40 hours  |
| BEST Plus 3.0  | 80-100 hours | 40 hours |
| ACT WorkKeys | 30 hours | 30 hours |

While instruction in multiple subject areas can be integrated into one class, grantees must track instructional hours between NRS pre- and post-testing per subject area. To ensure consistent data reporting statewide, grantees must follow guidelines for recording instructional hours in LACES as outlined in the Local Data Assurances. Time spent taking NRS assessments may be counted as instructional hours and must be reported as “Instruction - Assessment” in the state data system.

## Instructional Hour Exception Policy

Grantees may only NRS post-test learners who have not reached the publisher required minimum instructional hours under limited and special circumstances. The learner must meet at least one of the following categories to be post-tested prior to completing the required number of hours:

* The learner is exiting the program permanently; or
* Evidence indicates readiness to demonstrate educational gain.

Grantees must document each post-testing exception using the [Early Post-Test Form](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/23-24-early-post-test-form-06-13-23). Appropriate supporting documentation must be provided and kept by the grantee in the learner file if evidence is selected as the reason for early post-testing. Evidence for each exception must be reviewed and the exception form must be completed and signed by the program director, or their designee, before learners are early post-tested. The program director must list their designees in the local Assessment Assurances. Completed and signed exception forms must be saved by the grantee in the learner file and must be uploaded in the statewide data system under the learner’s record so that they are available to AEI staff for compliance review and monitoring purposes. Excessive exceptions will be considered an area of program improvement or non-compliance.

## Same Form Post-Testing

When a learner is ready to be NRS post-tested and has already been post-tested on all available forms at their current level within a subject area, grantees must follow test publisher guidelines administering a learner a form which they have already received. The same form must not be administered back-to-back per test publisher requirements. Additionally, most test publishers suggest a minimum of 60 and up to 80 hours of instruction before using a form previously administered to a learner. Please see the [Data Entry and Quality Control Procedures](#_Data_Entry_and) section for more details on ingests of same form testing.

**Test Validity and Out-of-Range Scores**

Each NRS test level in a series has a range of scale scores aligned to specific NRS Educational Functioning Levels, considered the target EFLs of the test level. A reliable range score is one that produces a target EFL, although tests can produce out-of-range scores. An out-of-range score is when the learner scores convert to an EFL below or above one of the targets. Grantees must follow test publisher guidelines for out-of-range scores and steps for required or recommended re-testing.

If re-testing is required for out-of-range scores, it must be done as quickly as possible, prior to the learner being placed into, or being allowed to continue attending classes. When re-testing is not required for out-of-range scores, grantees are encouraged to follow test publisher re-testing recommendations. When recommended re-testing is not possible, grantees may request an out-of-range score override from the AEI Office.

When tests are invalidated due to cheating or test session interruptions which prevent completion of tests, learners must be re-tested as quickly as possible using an alternate form prior to being placed into or being allowed to continue attending classes.

# Remote Testing

Remote testing using NRS assessments increases accessibility for learners and contributes to the practice of digital literacy skills. Grantees may and are encouraged to pre- and post-test eligible learners through remote testing when it best supports learners. All grantees administering remote testing must indicate so in their local Assessment Assurances. Should the grantee choose to implement remote NRS assessments, the grantee must follow all test publisher remote testing guidelines and complete required test vendor documentation and trainings. If a grantee’s decision to allow or not allow remote testing changes at any point during the grant, they will need to re-submit their revised local Assessment Assurances to the AEI Office.

## Instructional Hours through Distance Education

In programs where distance education has been approved by AEI, learners receiving instruction via distance education must have at least 12 hours of contact before being reported as NRS participants[[3]](#footnote-4). Additionally, distance learners must adhere to the same NRS assessment and instructional hour requirements described above for learners receiving face-to-face instruction. Pre- and post-tests may be administered face-to-face or remotely for distance learners. Both contact and proxy hours as defined in the [AEI Distance Education Policy](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/grantees/handbook/distance-learning) count towards the post-testing instructional hour requirements. Please refer to the AEI Distance Education Policy for further guidance on classifying and reporting distance education instruction.

# Performance Targets

AEI negotiates with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) annually to establish performance targets for participant2 educational gain, as well as the targets for the core follow-up measures. The targets are determined by past performance and continuous improvement requirements. Colorado’s negotiated targets for 2024-25 can be found on the [AEI Website](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/grantees/laces-data-dictionary/performance-accountability-targets).

# Training Requirements

Program staff administering NRS and alternative placement assessments must be trained in test administration and scoring to ensure that scores are valid and reliable. Training ensures accurate use of the tests, effective interpretation of learner results and maintains the integrity and quality of the assessment process. All staff involved in academic planning at the individual or class level are encouraged to participate in assessment-related training to support connections between class instruction and assessment even if they are not administering tests.

AEI will ensure training opportunities are made available in each of the approved assessments annually. This training is required for any local adult education program staff who have responsibility for the local grantees’ assessment procedures including administering, proctoring, and scoring assessment. Every two years, test administration recertification/refresher training will be required for the same local adult education program staff.

At least one staff member at each local program must be up to date with training requirements for the NRS and alternative placement assessments the program uses or is considering implementing to ensure that learners have access to assessments. Only local program staff members with active test administrator certifications may administer those NRS assessments in which they are certified. When NRS assessments are updated, AEI will inform grantees if additional training is needed to administer new versions.

Additionally, AEI will annually offer training on this Assessment Policy. Assessment Policy training is required for the Local Assessment Coordinator identified in the grantee’s local Assessment Assurances but is open to all staff administering and proctoring assessments.

## Maintaining Training Records

Local program staff members are responsible for tracking test administrator certification/recertification paperwork and Assessment Policy training completion in LACES. Local Assessment Coordinators are expected to continuously review certificates uploaded in LACES, to track recertification deadlines, and that non-certified staff, including those with expired credentials, do not administer assessments. Additionally, Local Assessment Coordinators must support test administrators with assessment implementation and must collaborate with the Accessible Design Coordinator in implementing testing accommodations.

## Using Proctors During Testing

Proctors may be utilized during NRS test administration if a certified test administrator is present in the room. A proctor is a staff person or program volunteer who has been partially or not formally trained in assessment administration. Proctors may hand out and collect materials, inventory materials, arrange the room, check learners in and get them seated, answer general procedural questions, and monitor learners as they are testing to ensure a positive, equitable testing environment. Proctors may not provide instructions at the beginning of a testing session, score tests, or advise learners on class placement based on their test scores.

# Materials, Inventory and Destruction

Grantees must maintain a local inventory of assessment materials as outlined by each test publisher. All assessment materials, including test administration manuals and completed answer sheets (which contain marks or responses) must be stored in a locked, preferably fireproof, file cabinet accessible to the program director or the director’s designee(s).

All assessment materials are protected under copyright. No duplication of any published materials or any portion of any published test materials is permitted for any reason. Grantees may not use displays, questions, or answers that appear on any test to create materials designed to teach or prepare learners to answer test items. Instead, grantees may use test blueprints, student reports, and/or designated sample items to inform instruction and learner preparation.

Staff members who administer assessments must return all materials immediately after use to the program director or the director’s designee(s). All answer sheets and scratch paper must be treated as confidential until appropriately destroyed, as outlined below.

Destruction of unusable, defaced, or outdated (longer than three years) testing materials in the local assessment inventory must follow assessment publisher guidelines.

For TABE, materials must be shredded or burned.

For CASAS, materials may be shredded, and grantees must notify CASAS at casas@casas.org providing the following information about the shredded materials: test series, form number, and the number of copies of each test form shredded (e.g. Life and Work Reading 187R: 14 copies). If the program prefers, they may return the materials to CASAS for destruction. In this case, mail the documents to 5151 Murphy Canyon Rd., Suite 220 San Diego, CA 92123-4339.

* For ACT WorkKeys, computer-based tests:
	+ Test administration manuals (Retain administration manuals for the duration of the current testing year, for use in future testing. After the current testing year, manuals may be securely destroyed at your site.)
	+ Test administration forms (Retain at your site for one year, then securely destroy.)
	+ User ID and password forms (Securely destroy if all testing is complete for the examinee.)
* For ACT WorkKeys paper-based tests, materials should be mailed back to ACT WorkKeys following the instructions in the test administration manual. (ACT recommends using envelopes or cartons they provide).

Upon destruction, the assessment materials inventory must be updated with the following information:

* Materials destroyed (e.g., five 36-M test booklets)
* Name of the staff person that destroyed the materials
* Date of destruction of the materials
* How the materials were destroyed (e.g., shredded)

# Accommodating Learners with Disabilities

AEI requires grantees to provide testing accommodations for eligible learners with disabilities. Some accommodations modify the conditions of administering a test or change the physical presentation of the assessment instrument in order to provide more equitable access to testing. Other accommodations do not alter the testing format in any way (e.g., sitting at the front of the room). These accommodations are made to allow the test taker with a disability to demonstrate an accurate representation of their skills and abilities. In all cases, accommodations must meet the needs of the eligible learner without compromising the validity of the test.

Grantees must ensure learners are informed of the availability of accommodations for testing during initial enrollment, orientation, and throughout the duration of the program. Signage indicating the rights of learners to request accommodations and the contact information of the grantee’s Local Accessible Design Coordinator must be on display anytime testing is taking place. It is strongly recommended that this information is also verbally shared prior to every testing session. Local grantees are responsible for providing fully accessible services and ensuring services meet reasonable criteria. Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting appropriate documentation of their disability (if required by the test publisher) at the time of registration, program entry, or after a professional evaluation takes place.

Documentation is required for accommodations that modify the conditions of the test, this must delineate the specific testing accommodations needs and must be maintained as confidential information; separately from other learner records. The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner’s ability to demonstrate performance on the test. The information must come from a doctor’s report, a diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, documentation from a vocational rehabilitation agency, and/or the learner’s secondary school. The recommended accommodations listed in the documentation provided must be followed.

Test administrators must report that an individual received testing accommodations in LACES. See the [Data Entry and Quality Control Procedures](#_heading=h.3whwml4) section for specifics on how to report testing accommodation information in LACES.

For NRS assessment purposes, grantees will use only those accommodations approved by the test publisher. Refer to test publisher guidelines, as [TABE](http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_Guidelines_to_Inclusive_Testing_2017.pdf), [CASAS](https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/testing-guidelines/Assessment-Accommodations), [BEST Plus](https://www.cal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/BP2.0-Test-Usage-Policy.pdf), and [WorkKeys](https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/WorkKeysAdminManualOnlineTestingNational.pdf) all have publicly available suggestions. Contact AEI if your program needs accommodations materials for a learner with disabilities. In the majority of cases, AEI is able to loan accommodation materials to grantees so the grantee does not incur the cost of those materials.

# Data Entry and Quality Control Procedures

AEI requires that assessment data be entered into the state data system, LACES, in a timely manner to track learner progress in real time and facilitate data monitoring for accurate reporting.

## Assessment Data

NRS pre- and post-test scores must be recorded in the state data system within one week of when the test occurred. Similarly, alternative placement assessments must also be reported in LACES within one week of when the test occurred. Pre-tests in each program year or new PoP must be entered into LACES before class enrollment and attendance data is entered. This includes tests pushed forward from a prior program year. All tests administered to learners, including those that are incomplete, invalidated, with out-of-range scores, early or same form post-test, etc. must be entered into LACES.

CASAS and TABE computer-based or scored tests are automatically ingested into LACES daily from each of the test publishers’ online testing and scoring systems. These automated ingests occur each morning around 7:00 a.m. (Mountain Time) and include the prior 30-90 days tests, depending on the system. Grantees testing learners on these assessments may choose to either manually report assessments and the resulting scale scores in LACES on the same day the test is administered, or they may choose to wait for the test to ingest the following morning.

Grantees not manually reporting tests in LACES are responsible for reviewing test records in LACES to ensure tests were ingested. Please note that tests where demographics do not match between LACES and the test publisher’s system cannot be ingested and must be manually reported. Additionally, tests triggering an early or same form post-test error cannot me ingested and must be manually reported in LACES.

All BEST Plus 3.0, WorkKeys, and any CASAS or TABE paper-based test not scored or entered into the test publisher’s online testing scoring or reporting systems cannot be automatically ingested into LACES and must be manually reported into the data system by grantees.

Only the AEI Data Coordinator may delete assessments in LACES. If the program needs to delete an assessment, the local staff must email the AEI Data Coordinator with the following information:

* Student ID
* Assessment form (including subject area)
* Scale score
* Date of assessment
* Rationale for why the assessment needs to be deleted; this information will be kept on file.

Any tests administered with accommodations approved through documentation must be noted in LACES. This may be done by either uploading the testing accommodations documentation into the learner’s documents in LACES, using the document type called “Accommodations Request Documentation”. Grantees can also choose to add a comment in the learner record describing the accommodations that were approved and provided using the comment type called “Testing Accommodations Comment.”

## Attendance Data

Only attendance hours aligned with the State Standards (see [Tools and Resources for Assessment Informed Instruction](#_Tools_and_Resources) section for more) may be counted towards NRS post-test eligibility. These are reported as “Instruction” hours under a class record in LACES, at a minimum, on a weekly basis at the daily level for each class a learner is enrolled in. Classes approved for learner mastery model distance education are excluded from this requirement but must be reported at least every 89 days (see the [Distance Education Policy](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/grantees/handbook/distance-learning) for more). All hours not aligned to state adult education standards do not contribute to NRS post-test eligibility.

The AEI Data Coordinator monitors data entry and quality on a monthly basis. AEI also ensures grantees are in compliance with the assessment policy through Assessment Assurances reviews and onsite monitoring.

# Tools and Resources for Assessment Informed Instruction

Grantees are encouraged to make use of available tools and resources by test publishers and Colorado state standards to align instruction. Colorado has adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards ([CCRS](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf)) for ABE/ASE learners and the English Language Proficiency Standards ([ELPS](https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/elp-standards-adult-ed.pdf)) for ESL learner. Both the CCRS and ELPS provide an overview of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of learners through each stage of adult education.

The NRS Educational Functioning Levels descriptors available on the [NRS Technical Assistance Guide](https://nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-Mar2021-508.pdf) (Appendix B) were created using CCR Standards as a foundation. These level descriptors outline critical concepts and skills, intended to guide both teaching and assessment for adult learners. Although the level descriptors are not comprehensive, they can be used to inform formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom may be used to track learner progress, as evidence to demonstrate learner skills acquisition and evaluate readiness to NRS post-test for EFL gain. [LINCS](https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teal/guide/formativeassessment) and other [education organizations](https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/formative-summative.html) have publicly available classroom assessment strategies and tools for reference.

[TABE](https://tabetest.com/resources-2/testing-information/blue-prints/), [CASAS](https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/curriculum-management-instruction/casas-basic-skills-content-standards), and [WorkKeys](https://www.workreadycommunities.org/files/pdf/WorkKeys%20NCRC%20Crosswalk%20to%20CCRSAE%20Report%20%26%20Appendices%201.6.22.pdf) provide publicly available test blueprints and standards guidance for each level assessment highlighting content areas, frequency, and alignment of test structures with Adult Education standards. These Blueprints provide a scope of the CCRS and ELPS skills needed to advance skills and EFLs. Additionally, all assessment publishers provide individualized learner profiles on assessment performance, via reports through their respective data systems (i.e., DRC Insight, CASAS TopsPro Enterprise, BEST Plus Score Management Software, and WorkKeys TAO and VTC). In conjunction with CCRS and ELPS, the Blueprints and performance reports can be used to develop targeted individualized instruction leading to a personalized learning experience and efficient skills acquisition.

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# Contact Us

Please contact AEI staff with questions at AEI@cde.state.co.us.

1. Additional guidance in implementing the assessment policy can be found in the Assessment Assurances. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. BEST Plus 3.0 paper-based testing has valid scores only through ESL Level 4. BEST Plus 3.0 computer adaptive testing has valid scores through all NRS ESL levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. A learner must be age-eligible, complete an intake form, have a valid pre-test, and complete at least twelve (12) instructional hours in order to be considered a WIOA Title II participant for reporting purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)