

draft

Washington State

Assessment, Data Quality & Collection Policies & NRS Monitoring Plan Policy Paper

FY 2003-2004

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PREFACE

Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 authorizes Adult & Family Literacy programs, and requires that all states establish a comprehensive accountability system for adult education programs. Accountability details are defined through the National Reporting System (NRS). (See: <http://www.nrsweb.org/guidelines.asp> and <http://www.nrsweb.org/traininginfo/dataquality.pdf>)

The assessment policies and procedures explained below will ensure that all Adult and Family Literacy programs in Washington comply by using:

- Standardized assessments to determine educational participant educational gains;
- Consistent testing and security protocols to ensure standardization and quality data; and
- Data to promote continuous improvement of local programs.

Legislation and our State Plan clearly articulate that the purpose of adult education is to help people improve their literacy skills, become lifelong learners, attain and retain employment, and become more effective parents and citizens.

To achieve these goals, programs address the needs of learners by designing and delivering effective instructional services. And, to do that, programs need information about who is enrolled and participating in the program, how long they attend, what they achieve, and why. Coincidentally, this is the same information adult education staff spend time and resources collecting for federal accountability reporting.

Professional development activities that follow CASAS implementation training will focus on looking at these data for classroom teaching and learning purposes. This information can be used for much more than completing federal accountability reports: it can help demonstrate a program's accomplishments to the general public and its funders, help manage the program, and improve teaching and learning.

I. ASSESSMENT POLICIES

1. **All Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs funded by the Washington State Office of Adult Literacy will use the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) instruments.**
 - a. Local programs may use either the CASAS Employability Competency System (ECS) and/or the CASAS Life Skills Assessment systems to measure education gain in ABE Reading, ABE Math, ESL Reading, and ESL Listening.
 - b. Local programs must use the appropriate CASAS appraisal instrument(s) based on the student's identified goals (refer to Assessment Policy Attachment B)
 - c. All adult and family literacy students will be assessed using English language CASAS for federal accountability and reporting purposes.
 - d. Students are not to be post-tested in subjects they have not studied.
 - e. Testing will take place in rooms that are accessible, quiet, comfortable, appropriately lit, and distraction-free.
 - f. All students taking CASAS tests must be provided test accommodations if documentation of a request is on file.
 - g. Programs must obtain and keep an approved Release of Information form signed by the student prior to requesting or releasing any information regarding a student, including information about his/her disability status.
 - h. Programs may score CASAS tests locally and share test results with students in a timely manner. All security, confidentiality and procedural rules in this policy paper must be followed when scoring tests. Test results, however, are official only when the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges receives answer sheets mailed from the providers and scans the completed answer sheets into WABERS.
2. **Programs must use the appropriate form or version of the assessment.**
 - a. A different form of the test must be used for pre- and post-testing so that students do not remember the items from the previous administration.
 - b. Local programs **must** follow the test publisher's guidelines in selecting the correct test form for each student. (See CASAS "next test" information at: http://www.casas.org/22R&D/Suggested_next_test_02AD.cfm?selected_id=687&wt)
 - c. These CASAS appraisal instruments will be used in a standardized manner:

- Form 20 ESL Reading and Listening
 - Form 30 Life Skills Reading and Math
 - Form 130 ECS Reading and Math
- d. If CASAS Life Skills pre- and post-tests are used, the forms of the tests that will be used in a standardized manner are:
- Forms 27-28 Very low level reading for ABE pre-literacy and ESL 1
 - Forms 31-32 Up to ABE Level 1 Reading and Math; up to ESL Level 2 Reading
 - Form 32X Up to Reading ABE 2; up to ESL 3 Reading
 - Forms 33-34 Up to ABE Level 3 Reading and Math; up to ESL Level 4 Reading
 - Form 34X Up to ABE Level 4 Reading; up to ESL Level 5 Reading
 - Forms 35-36 Up to ASE Level 1 Reading and Math; up to ESL Level 6 Reading
 - Forms 37-38 Up to ASE Level 2 Reading and Math
- e. If CASAS ECS pre- and post-tests are used, the forms of the tests that will be used in a standardized manner are:
- Forms 27-28 Very low level reading for ABE pre-literacy and ESL 1
 - Forms 11-12 Up to ABE Level 1 Reading and Math
 - Forms 13-14 Up to ABE Level 3 Reading and Math
 - Forms 15-16 Up to ASE Level 1 Reading and Math
 - Forms 17-18 Up to ASE Level 2 Reading and Math
- f. If CASAS ECS pre- and post-tests are used for ESL, the Listening pre- and post-tests that will be used in a standardized manner in conjunction with ECS Reading tests are:
- Forms 51-52 Up to ESL Level 2
 - Forms 63-64 Up to ESL Level 4
 - Forms 65-66 Up to ESL Level 6
- g. If CASAS Life Skills pre- and post-tests are used for ESL, the Listening pre- and post-tests that will be used in a standardized manner in conjunction with Life Skills Reading tests are:
- Forms 51-52 Up to ESL Level 2
 - Forms 53-54 Up to ESL Level 4
 - Forms 55-56 Up to ESL Level 6
- 3. A CASAS appraisal will be administered to new students during orientation or as part of a goal-setting activity.**
- a. An appraisal will be administered as an initial assessment to determine:
- whether an adult is eligible for Adult & Family Literacy services, and
 - to identify the appropriate CASAS pre-test instrument.

- b. A continuing student does not need to be re-appraised for Fall 2003; rather, he or she is to be pre-tested using the CASAS test(s) appropriate for his or her current enrollment level.
- c. A CASAS appraisal instrument **can not** be used as a substitute for pre-testing or for post-testing.

4. The appropriate CASAS pre-test will be administered after the appraisal.

- a. Results of the CASAS pre-test will be used by WABERS for federal accountability purposes to categorize students in the appropriate NRS Educational Functioning Level (EFL) according to the criteria defined in the NRS Implementation Guidelines.
- b. WABERS will place students in an EFL, for federal accountability reporting purposes, based on the lowest pre-test score in the subject-area in which they are studying.
- c. All completed CASAS answer sheets must be submitted to the SBCTC so that all scores are entered into WABERS.

5. A CASAS post-test will be administered at the end of each quarter, but no sooner than after 45-50 hours of instruction.

- a. Programs must use the appropriate CASAS assessment post-test form based on the student's pre-test score (See 2.b).
- b. Continuing students do not need to be pre-tested for the next quarter.
- c. For low-intensity programs, post-tests are to be administered when the student has persisted in the program for five months.
- d. The appropriate post-test is to be administered to students who have indicated they are leaving the program.
- e. An "instructional hour" is defined by the NRS to include "all time the learner spends in a program-sponsored activity designed to promote student learning in the curriculum." Activities to count include: time in the goal-setting/orientation activity; time in class receiving instruction; time in a learning lab; time spent with a program-sponsored tutor; and time on assessment activities, including initial assessment and follow-up tests, such as post-tests. Time should be reported as total hours, rounded to the nearest whole hour.
- f. Actual attendance must be recorded individually for each student every time the class meets and for all Adult & Family Literacy activities in which the student is enrolled.

- 6. Educational gain, the literacy measure reported for the NRS, is determined by comparing the student's initial pre-test functioning level with the educational functioning level determined through post-testing.**
 - a. Level gain will be determined using the NRS Guidelines definitions, test scores and skill descriptors. **Attachment A** lists the NRS educational functioning levels as they will be applied in Washington state, and correlates them to the Washington Adult and Family Literacy Competencies and CASAS levels and test score ranges.
 - b. WABERS will calculate educational gain automatically when CASAS pre- and post-test score information is scanned according with CASAS procedures and entered at the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.
 - c. If a student is not post-tested, WABERS cannot calculate whether he or she completed a level for federal accountability purposes.

- 7. All local staff administering CASAS appraisals, pre- and / or post-tests must be trained in proper CASAS test administration procedures.**
 - a. Test administrators must use the form of CASAS assessment appropriate for the students.
 - b. The tests must be administered at the proper time.
 - c. Test administrators must follow CASAS directions and procedures for administering tests and giving directions to students.
 - d. Test administrators must not provide help to students being tested.
 - e. Tests should be administered in rooms that are accessible, quiet, comfortable, appropriately lit, and distraction free.
 - f. Only trained staff will administer the CASAS assessments.
 - g. The CASAS appraisal is never used as a substitute for pre-testing or post-testing.

- 8. Programs must address assessment issues for students with disabilities.**
 - a. No student may be exempted from CASAS testing due to a disability.
 - b. All students taking CASAS tests must be provided test accommodations if documentation of a request is on file.
 - c. Programs will not include any indication that any test was taken with accommodations when submitting assessment reports.

- d. Programs must obtain and keep an approved Release of Information form, available from the Office of Adult Literacy, signed by the student prior to requesting or releasing any information regarding a student or his or her disability status. Contact Michael Tate at mtate@sbctc.ctc.edu or 360-704-4329 for a complete list or for questions.
- 9. Test security is an essential component of standardized assessment. Programs must have a system in place for the safeguarding of all restricted materials, including the distribution and collection of assessment materials.**
- a. The program director is responsible for safeguarding all restricted materials.
 - b. Restricted materials – including test booklets, answer sheets, answer keys, and related materials – must be stored in a locking cabinet accessible only to the program director and his/her designee(s).
 - c. Completed answer sheets must be treated as confidential and stored with testing materials until sent to the SBCTC.
 - d. No duplication of any CASAS test is permitted for any reason.
 - e. Test administrators/instructors may never discuss test items with students.
 - f. Each program will maintain inventories of restricted materials for monitoring and review purposes.
- 10. Local programs may not use performance task-based or other locally-developed assessments for federal accountability educational gain reporting. For instructional purposes, however, local programs are encouraged to continue developing and using their own learner-centered assessments when those have proven useful for teaching and learning.**
- 11. GED preparation students must be assessed with CASAS appraisals and pre- and post-tests. NRS states that GED Practice Tests cannot be used for initial placements or educational gain determination for federal accountability reporting purposes. Likewise, “successful completion of . . . GED test(s) cannot be used to validate educational gain and subsequent level completion” for federal reporting purposes.**
- a. Adult learners at the GED Preparation 2 level, however, will be considered to have completed that level if they have passed all five official GED tests and have earned a GED diploma. The U.S. Department of Education made this exception because “GED completion” is a core federal performance accountability system indicator and “high adult secondary education level” completion is not.

- 12. External Diploma Program (EDP) students take nationally standardized and normed pre- and post- EDP assessments, and therefore (policy being determined)**
- 13. Adult High School Completion students must be assessed with CASAS appraisals and pre- and post-tests for federal accountability reporting purposes. Earning high school credits will not demonstrate level completion or educational gain.**
 - a. Adult learners at High School Completion 2 level, however, will be considered to have completed that level when they are awarded a high diploma. The U.S. Department of Education made this exception because “High School Completion” is a core federal performance accountability system indicator and “high adult secondary education level” completion is not.
- 14. For federal accountability reporting purposes, neither the TOEFL nor COMPASS nor ASSET tests can be used as placement appraisals or to document education gain or level completion in Adult & Family Literacy programs, even if the score is high enough to qualify the student for entry into college.**
 - a. Educational gain must be determined by post-testing on a different, but equivalent, form of the pre-test. At a minimum, researchers would have to establish that these tests have been designed to measure educational gain; that the content or skills being measured by the tests are consistent with the NRS, and that the tests have multiple forms that can generate valid pre- and post-test comparisons. In addition, the test publishers would have to crosswalk the tests to the NRS levels.

ATTACHMENT A:

Correlations between Washington Adult & Family Literacy Competencies, NRS Educational Functioning Levels and CASAS levels and test score ranges are listed below:

Adult Basic Skills Competency Levels				
WA ABE Competency	NRS ABE Level Name	CASAS ABE Level & Name		CASAS ABE Score Ranges
ABE 1	Beginning ABE Literacy	A	Beginning Literacy/Pre-Beginning ABE	200 and below
ABE 2	Beginning Basic Ed.	B	Low Basic Skills	201-210
ABE 3	Low Intermediate Basic Ed.	B	Intermediate Basic Skills	211-220
ABE 4	High Intermediate Basic Ed.	C	Advanced Basic Skills	221-235
GED 1, HSC 1	Low Adult Secondary Ed.	D	Adult Secondary	236-245
GED 2, HSC 2	High Adult Literacy Ed.	E	Advanced Adult Secondary	246 and above

ESL Competency Levels				
WA ESL Competency	NRS ESL Level Name	CASAS ESL Level Name		CASAS ESL Score Ranges
ESL 1	Beginning ESL Literacy	A	Beginning Literacy/Pre-Beginning ESL	180 and below
ESL 2	Beginning ESL	A	Low Beginning/High Beginning ESL	181-200
ESL 3	Low Intermediate ESL	B	Low Intermediate ESL	201-210
ESL 4	High Intermediate ESL	B	High Intermediate ESL	211-220
ESL 5	Low Advanced ESL	C	Advanced ESL	221-235
ESL 6	High Advanced ESL	D	Exit ESL Program	236-245

ATTACHMENT B:

Intake and Goal Setting Recommendations

Setting students' goals is an integral part of the education process. Establishing goals not only helps define the areas in which instruction and learning is to be focused, but goals also provide a benchmark by which programs and students can assess their progress. For these reasons, the goals set should be attainable and measurable.

Within the NRS framework, all students are assumed to have at least one goal: to develop literacy skills. This assumed goal is the reason that all students are counted in the educational gain measure. Note that the default goal of educational gain remains regardless of whether the student designates any additional goals.

While setting a realistic goal is important for the NRS, students' longer-term goals should not be ignored simply because they are not obtainable during the NRS reporting period. In addition to helping students identify long-term goals, many programs help students set short-term goals as markers that students recognize as progress toward long-term goals.

Each local program's goal setting will include the following:

1. Procedure to orient students and help them set goals for instruction.

Each local program will have a procedure in place for orienting students to the program and helping them set learning goals. During the intake process, students provide basic information about themselves, may be screened for disabilities, and are assessed for educational level. Enrolling students in the Educational Interviewing activity will fulfill this requirement, and, for college-based programs, will generate FTE funding. Other goal-setting procedures may be used if attendance in and curriculum for it are documented.

2. Procedure includes identification of attainable short-and long-term goals.

During the goal setting process, students, with assistance from program staff, identify their goals and reasons for attending the program. As part of this process, staff help students set both a realistic timeline for attaining each goal and a means for determining whether the goal has been achieved. Setting the timeline and evidence of achievement will help the student realize whether the goal is short- or long-term and whether the goal is achievable. For example, when they enter a program many students state very broad goals, such as attaining a GED or getting a job. Breaking the goal down into discrete steps – with short and long-term milestones along the way – establishes goals that will help learners persist, as well as identifying appropriate goals for NRS accountability purposes. Since students often change their goals as they begin instruction, and since learners want feedback, goal-setting can extend over additional sessions throughout the quarter.

3. Method identifies NRS follow-up goals appropriately.

The goal-setting process will identify whether a student has a goal to obtain employment, retain employment, enter postsecondary education or obtain a GED. Since each program will be held accountable for whether the learner achieves this goal, the goal-setting process should consider whether there is a realistic chance that the student can achieve the goal during the reporting period. Results of these goals will be determined through data matching. For example, it is unlikely that lower level students will enter post-secondary education or pass the GED tests during this short period. For such students, consider setting such goals for the long-term. Employment goals may be more difficult to evaluate. During the goal-setting process, explore with the student the skills he or she needs to get a job and the time that might be needed to attain these skills. These skills may be broad, such as learning to speak English better, or more specific, such as to read manuals to operate machinery.

II. CASAS IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

- 1. Unless specifically addressed in the following CASAS Implementation Policies or the Assessment Policies in Part I, programs will abide by the rules and procedures outlined in the CASAS *Test Administration Manual*.**
- 2. A different form of the assessment must be used for pre- and post-testing so that students do not remember the items from the previous test administration.**
 - a. A different form must be used for pre- and post-testing. CASAS assessments designed for multiple administrations on the same students, such as for pre- and post-testing, have different, but equivalent versions or forms. Numbers designate the different forms of each test. Generally, the odd-numbered forms are considered pre-tests, and the even-numbered forms are post-tests.
- 3. Only those designated by the local program director and acknowledged by the Office of Adult Literacy as a member of the state's CASAS training cadre will be authorized to conduct peer trainings, and only at their local programs.**
- 4. Only those officially certified in the CASAS database as having attended an implementation training or attending a CASAS implementation training in Fall 2003 will be eligible for membership in the state's CASAS training cadre.**
- 5. Test security is an essential component of standardized assessment.**
 - a. Programs must have a system in place for the safeguarding of all restricted materials, including the distribution and collection of assessment materials.

III. NRS DATA COLLECTION AND DATA QUALITY POLICIES

- 1. The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) has been selected as the standardized assessment for Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and Adult Secondary Education programs. Additional policies regarding assessment can be found under Assessment Policies in Section I.**
- 2. Local program staff will have on file a clear written description and understanding of its roles and responsibilities for data collection, including the following:**
 - a. A description of the local data collection process
 - b. Individual staff roles in data collection are stated
 - c. Data collection responsibilities are included in job descriptions
- 3. Local program staff will use the state definitions for data elements listed in the WABERS data dictionary available on the WABERS website (?)**
- 4. For data collection, local program staff will use standard WABERS forms or local forms that include all the required, state-defined data elements.**
- 5. Local programs will report data into WABERS at least quarterly.**
 - a. OAL recommends weekly data entry into the web-based WABERS.
 - b. Local programs will report data in WABERS according to the data collection policies in this document, the NRS definitions, and the WABERS data dictionary.
- 6. Local programs will have an error-checking and quality control system for identifying missing and inaccurate data. The system is defined as:**
 - a. Data checking occurs on a regular, prescribed schedule with clear deadlines.
 - b. Specific staff has been assigned to data checking.
 - c. Data checkers have authority to work with staff to correct data.
 - d. The program director will regularly review the data to spot errors, missing data, anomalous data, or data that doesn't make sense.
- 7. Data entry procedures are clear and timely.**
 - a. Staff has been assigned to enter data into WABERS.

- b. The data entry staff person has the authority to ask for clarification and resolution of errors.
- c. Data entry is scheduled at frequent regular intervals.
- d. There is an organized way to identify and correct errors and missing data.
- e. Staff has access to WABERS error reports.

8. Local program staff will have on-going training on data collection.

- a. Opportunities exist for staff to focus on resolving problems with missing or inaccurate data.

9. Local programs will use WABERS data for program improvement.

- a. Staff has direct and timely access to information from the database.
- b. Staff understands how to use data for program improvement or management.
- c. Staff analyzes student outcomes and demographics according to such variables as number of instructional hours received, length of enrollment, teachers and classes enrolled and educational functioning level.
- d. Staff will be able to access WABERS reports and receive them promptly.
- e. Staff is able to query WABERS to promptly print a report locally.

IV. NRS MONITORING PLAN

- Monitor:** one OAL staff person
- Number of site visits:** at least 18 site visits each fiscal year
(one-third of the 55 federal ABE/ESL/ASE contractors each year)
- Monitoring periods:** January-June 2004,
September-June 2004-05, and
September-June 2005-06
- Monitoring protocol:** based on the following USDE documents:
Local Data Auditing, p.75, in Guide for Improving NRS Data Quality
Quality Control Guidance, pp.54-58 in NRS Implementation Guide
NRS State Data Quality Standards Checklist

Pre-monitoring Procedures:

- Notify programs regarding monitoring visit and schedule
- Send state NRS Data Quality Policies
- Provide both on-site and distance technical assistance regarding data quality, as requested by local site

Monitoring procedures:

- interview local program staff involved in data collection on their data procedures, particularly on how staff deals with missing and incomplete data, data entry procedures and reporting time
- review program's assessment and follow-up procedures to ensure compliance with state policies
- draw a random sample of student records to examine for completeness and accuracy
- compare sample records to data entered in WABERS
- contact a sample of students by telephone for verification of:
 - attendance (especially dates of enrollment and approximate frequency of attendance)
 - test and assessments (ask what tests they took and when)
 - goals (what goals were set, and were they met)
 - satisfaction with services
 - using a standard interview script
- verify attainment of follow-up goals with a third-party source

Post-Monitoring Procedures:

- OAL monitor leaves monitoring report indicating what is in and out of compliance, and noting any promising practice/s
- OAL monitor notifies appropriate ABLE regional training coordinator for any follow-up technical assistance
- Local program staff develop action plan to come into compliance, if required
- OAL monitor reviews action plan
- OAL monitor schedules follow-up visit, if needed

V. INDIVIDUAL STUDENT RECORD DOCUMENTS

Office of Adult Literacy NRS Data Quality Review

Local program staff will develop individual student records that include the documentation below so an on-site monitor can verify data for federal accountability purposes.. The documents below may be originals or copies.

Intake/Placement Records
Registration form CASAS appraisal test score and CASAS pre-test score
These records provide verification that the student was enrolled, correctly tested, that the score is correctly reported, and that the correct level was reported.
Accommodation Request Form
This record verifies that a CASAS test accommodation was requested and that the accommodation was provided.
Attendance Records
Actual instructional hour attendance records
This record verifies the actual hours of attendance hours reported in WABERS. NRS recommends that attendance be reported on a weekly basis.
Achievement/Progress Records
CASAS post-test scores, if appropriate
These records verify CASAS post-test data
Goal Setting Records
Intake goal-setting Quarterly goal-setting review sheet Updates, modifications, refinements, as appropriate
These records are used to verify student goals and goal-setting activities

Programs should ensure that all data elements are being entered and entered correctly, since data that is omitted or incorrect may result non-reportable students and student outcomes.