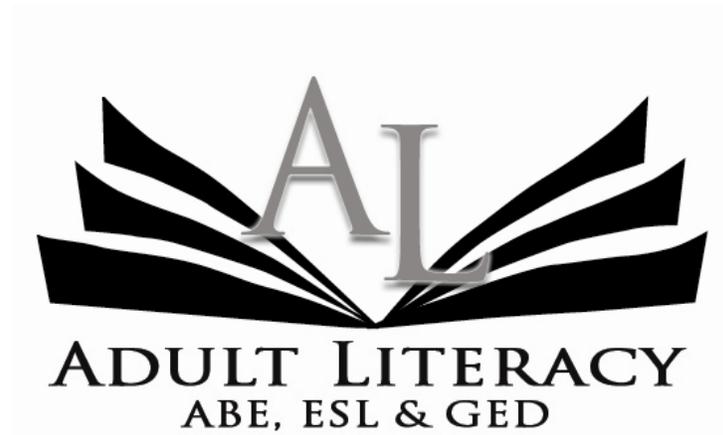


Iowa's Adult Literacy Program Assessment Policy Guidelines



July, 2012

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Preface

Assessment of adult literacy students is an essential part of providing an exemplary educational program that will help students to reach success. Iowa's Assessment Policy has stood the test of time. However, in 2009, a formal approval process for assessment policies was used to review our policy and some minor adjustments were requested by the U.S. Dept. of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Therefore, this revised version reflects those minor adjustments.

This document is designed to provide guidelines pertaining to standardized assessment practices in Iowa's adult literacy program. It also fulfills the mandate from the U.S. Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE:DAEL) that each state develop, publish and implement on an annual basis a written assessment policy. (*Reference to a July 21,2005 memorandum from DAEL regarding State Assessment Policy Guidance.*) The state policy is "to describe the assessments local programs are to use, when local programs are to administer pre- and post-tests, training requirements for assessments, and assessment administration and reporting requirements. The implementation of effective assessment policies will result in high quality assessment data from local programs."

The Iowa Department of Education requires all eligible adult literacy program providers to utilize the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) standardized assessment instruments for the National Reporting System (NRS) to report educational gain benchmarks by educational functioning levels (EFLs). The CASAS standardized assessment instruments are the only state approved instruments utilized for state and federal reporting requirements. The utilization of common assessment instruments based on the same standard score scale provides standardized data and progress reports across all of Iowa's adult literacy eligible providers. This document describes the many facets of the assessment process currently implemented in Iowa's adult literacy program.

Alex Harris
State Director for Adult Education
Iowa Department of Education

1.0 Introduction and Content

This document provides the Iowa Department of Education’s guidelines for developing and implementing a comprehensive state and local assessment policy for Iowa’s adult literacy program which includes: (1) adult basic education (ABE), (2) English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), (3) adult secondary education/GED Programs (ASE/GED), and (4) workforce and family literacy programs. It identifies key assessment policies that support:

- selection and use of appropriate assessment instruments;
- appropriate test administration, scoring, and reporting of test scores;
- appropriate use of tests results to inform instruction and improve programs; and
- reporting valid and reliable assessment results and related information for accountability to local, state, and federal funding sources and policymakers.

The Iowa Department of Education’s assessment guidelines include the selection and use of appropriate learner assessment and procedures for:

- accurate learner placement into appropriate program and instructional level;
- diagnostic information to inform instruction;
- pre- and post-testing to monitor progress toward goals; and
- certification of level and program completion.

The policy guidelines also include staff training and test security requirements for all staff who are administering tests and using the results.

1.1 Need for Assessment Policy

Standardized, ongoing assessment of learner progress is essential to ensure that all learners become proficient in literacy and language skills for adult learners. To ensure accuracy and consistency, the Iowa Department of Education prescribes that Iowa’s adult literacy programs use the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) assessment instruments which have proven validity and reliability and correlate to the National Reporting System (NRS). CASAS assessment data are used to: (1) place learners at appropriate levels of instruction, (2) diagnose learner strengths and weaknesses, (3) monitor progress, and (4) certify learner mastery at specific levels of instruction or readiness to exit Iowa’s adult literacy programs.

1.1.1 Validity and Reliability

All CASAS assessment instruments undergo rigorous test development and validation procedures and meet the standards of the: (1) American Education Research Association (AERA), (2) National Council for Measurement in Education (NCME) and (3) American Psychological Association (APA). **The CASAS Technical Manual—Third Edition 2004 (CTM)** contains detailed information about test validity and reliability.

1.1.2 Validity

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

Criterion-related validity, sometimes referred to as predictive validity, assesses the ability or effectiveness of an instrument in predicting something it should theoretically be able to predict. CASAS created ABE Skill Level Descriptors (reading, math, and writing skills) to show a continuum of skills from beginning ABE through advanced adult secondary levels. CASAS also created ESL Skill Level Descriptors (listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills) for ESL from Beginning Literacy/Pre-Beginning ESL through Proficient Skills. Skill Level Descriptors provide general content information on how an adult learner's numerical scale score on a CASAS test in a specific skill area corresponds to the job-related and life skills tasks a person can generally accomplish.

Results from most CASAS tests are reported on a common numerical scale. This scale has been successfully used with more than three million adult and youth learners. The CASAS scale is divided into 5 broad levels, A (Beginning Literacy) to E (Advanced Secondary), each encompassing a range of scores. Levels A and B have been further subdivided to guide instructional placement and to monitor student progress. Each level is defined by a CASAS scale score range with corresponding competency descriptors of performance in employment and adult life skills contexts.

The CASAS Skill Level Descriptors have been validated by expert teachers, members of the National CASAS Consortium, as well as through external validation studies. (See the *CTM*, pp. 57-70.) During the late 1990s staff from the Center for Applied Linguistics and CASAS worked together to review and update the correlation between Student Performance Levels (SPLs) and CASAS levels in order to ensure that the NRS skill level descriptors used for reporting learner gains were consistent with research that had already been done in the field. Large-scale CASAS implementing states such as California, Connecticut, and Oregon participated on a national level NRS advisory committee and provided guidance in the initial development and implementation of the NRS.

Once the NRS educational functioning levels were finalized, CASAS conducted a review and confirmed that the CASAS Skill Level Descriptors align with the skill levels of the NRS. The relationship among CASAS levels and score ranges of the NRS, National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), Student Performance Levels (SPLs), and years of schooling completed was established and reported in Table 1.

Table 1**Relationship Among CASAS, NRS*, NALS**, SPL***, and Years of Schooling Completed**

CASAS Levels	CASAS Score Ranges	NRS Levels and Names for ABE	NRS Levels and Names for ESL	NALS Levels	Student Performance Levels (SPL)	Years of School Completed
A	180 and below		1 Beginning ESL Literacy	1	1	1 to 2
A	181 – 200	1 Beginning ABE Literacy	2 Beginning ESL	1	2 and 3	1 to 2
B	201 – 210	2 Beginning Basic Education	3 Low Intermediate ESL	1	4	3 to 5
B	211 – 220	3 Low Intermediate Basic Education	4 High Intermediate ESL	1	5	6 to 7
C	221 – 235	4 High Intermediate Basic Education	5 Low Advanced ESL	2	6	8 to 10
D	236 – 245	5 Low Adult Secondary Education	6 High Advanced ESL	2/3	7	11 to 12
E	246 and above	6 High Adult Secondary Education		3	8	13+

* National Reporting System (WIA Title II)

** National Adult Literacy Survey

*** Student Performance Levels

Source: CASAS, 2005

1.1.3 Reliability

The **CTM** provides data on the reliability of the item bank (Chapter 3) and specific test series (Chapters 4 and 5). The Test Administration Manuals (TAMs) for each test series also contain information about reliability.

Reliability (test accuracy) has two major subcomponents—**consistency and stability**. For each scale score attained on a CASAS test, a standard error of measurement (SEM) is given. In addition to reporting a scale score for raw scores attained on a test, CASAS established a range of accuracy for each test form. For every score in the accurate range, a SEM for each scale score is given. For scale scores exceeding the accurate range, CASAS provides a usable conservative scale score estimate. However, instructional staff are encouraged to administer a test at the next more difficult test level to obtain a more accurate scale score estimate. CASAS does not report scale scores for raw scores falling below the accurate range.

In addition to the SEMs, the Test Information Function is displayed for each of the test forms in Chapters 4 and 5 of the **CTM**.

CASAS uses the most current research and recommended methodology in educational measurement practice—Item Response Theory (IRT)—to establish indices of item bank, test, and test score reliability. For indices of consistency, CASAS tests for the unidimensionality of the item bank making sure that items are all measuring the same underlying construct. Results of these analyses can be found on pages 29 through 50 of the **CTM**. Traditional items statistics including item point biserial correlations and their p-values are presented for all the test series.

The test for item **stability** is found under ‘parameter invariance’ (pp. 51-52) and ‘differential item functioning’ (pp. 52-56). Parameter invariance analyses test whether the item difficulties have changed over time. The findings in 2002 show that the item difficulties have maintained their relative difficulties since their original calibrations in the 1980s. Differential item functioning (DIF) tests whether the item difficulties change when measuring different kinds of learners such as different gender and different ethnicity. The findings show that the item difficulties have remained stable regardless of gender or ethnicity.

1.1.4. Studies Conducted

Three claims of CASAS implementation were evaluated and upheld by the Program Effectiveness Panel: U.S. Department of Education (1993) for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs. Each claim centered on adult learners in adult and alternative educational programs. The degree of program implementation was determined by the adoption of key elements of the CASAS system. These key elements included: (1) identifying CASAS Competencies necessary for learners to meet their goals, (2) linking these competencies to instructional materials using the CASAS Instructional Materials Quick Search, and (3) linking these competencies to appropriate CASAS assessment tools. Learners within education programs that adopted the key elements demonstrated:

- Significant learning gains;
- Increased hours of participation; and
- Achievement of higher goal attainment compared to programs that have not adopted the key elements.

Numerous studies such as the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (1991) have repeatedly confirmed this claim. In addition, two California studies, an Oregon study as well as a North Carolina study, among others, confirm these three claims. (*For a detailed literature review, please refer to the CTM.*)

Another important study examined the relationship of CASAS to the 2002 version of the General Educational Development (GED) test battery using data from California, Iowa, Oregon, Kansas, and Hawaii (n = 4801). A clear monotonic increasing relationship was found to exist between CASAS reading scores and GED reading scores and CASAS math scores and GED math scores. Moreover, a similar

relationship was found to exist between CASAS reading and overall GED results averaged across the five test content areas. (See *CTM*, pp. 63-65.)

A number of recent studies have been conducted across the United States to reaffirm that the content and competencies addressed in the initial development of the item banks are still valid and relevant to the current needs of learners, instructors, administrators, employers and social service agencies. These studies are:

- The Iowa Basic Skills Survey (IABSS)—1995
- Validation of Foundation Skills (Indiana Department of Education)—1996
- Targeting Education: The Connecticut Basic Skills Survey—1997
- CABSS Report: California Adult Basic Skills Survey—1999

(See the *CTM*, pp. 24-26 and Appendix C. pp. 213-225 for detailed information about these validation studies.)

For the past two years (1994-1996), CASAS has undertaken the development of a content standards framework on behalf of the National CASAS Consortium states. The project utilizes the expertise of adult education professionals across the country to determine the essential content standards in reading and math for ABE/ASE and reading and listening for ESL. The project identifies the basic skills content standards at each NRS level embedded in CASAS competencies and links them to appropriate CASAS assessments. Iowa implemented the CASAS Content Standards System during State Program Year 2006 (October 2005.)

Iowa has developed and implemented a CASAS based basic skills certification program in the modalities of: (1) reading, (2) mathematics, (3) writing, and (4) listening. A total of 15 different certificates are issued in each modality for CASAS levels A-D. The listening skill certificates are issued for CASAS levels A-C. The basic skill certification program is considered to be an integral part of the CASAS content standards initiative.¹

1.2 Purposes and Uses of Assessment

1.2.1 CASAS Assessments

In subsequent sections of this document a more detailed discussion of the purposes, descriptions, policies, and test administration procedures of CASAS standardized assessments will be provided. In general, CASAS assessments are used to ensure accuracy in: (1) learner placement (appraisal tests), (2) diagnosis of learner strengths and weaknesses, (3) inform instruction (pre-tests), (4) monitoring progress (post-tests), and (5) certifying learner mastery (certification tests). These tests are administered in a standardized fashion and assessment results provide the basis for state and federal accountability reporting.

¹ The reader is referred to the publication titled *Iowa's Community College Basic Literacy Skills Credential Program Annual Report: Program Year 2005*. The electronic version is available at <http://educateiowa.gov/>.

1.2.2 Use of Informal Assessments

The Iowa Department of Education encourages local adult literacy programs to use a variety of informal assessments to assist in informing instruction. The use of teacher-made tests, unit tests, portfolios, applied performance assessments, learner observations, etc., should be encouraged to monitor learning and to inform instruction on a regular, ongoing basis. However, all NRS educational gains benchmark results must be reported utilizing approved CASAS assessment instruments.

1.3 Summary and Overview

1.3.1 Appraisal Tests: Initial Orientation and Placement into Program and Instructional Level

Initial placement with an appraisal test gauges a learner's reading, math, listening comprehension, writing and speaking skills. The test results guide placement into the appropriate program or instructional level, and also identify the appropriate progress pre-test level. The Iowa Department of Education strongly encourages the use of appraisals whenever feasible to ensure that the appropriate decisions are made regarding: (1) educational placement, (2) pre-test forms to administer, and (3) selection of short and long term instructional goals.

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

The Iowa Department of Education suggests that Iowa's adult literacy programs use one of the following appraisals in the modalities or skill areas indicated in Tables 2A and 2B.

Table 2A

CASAS Appraisal Tests for ESL

<i>Skills Areas</i>	<i>ESL Appraisal Form 20</i>
Reading	✓
Listening	✓
Writing	✓
Speaking	✓

Source: CASAS, 2005

Table 2B

CASAS Appraisal Tests for ABE/ASE

<i>Skills Areas</i>	<i>Life Skills Form 30</i>	<i>Employability Form 120 or 130</i>	<i>Workforce Learning Form 220 or 230</i>
Reading	✓	✓	✓
Math	✓	✓	✓

Source: CASAS, 2005

Appraisal tests may not be used as a pre-test or to measure learner progress. Each CASAS Test Administration Manual includes specific recommendations about which level of pre-test to administer based on the appraisal test score. CASAS provides appraisal tests for reading, math, listening comprehension, writing and speaking. **CASAS appraisal tests should be administered prior to learner placement and prior to administering the appropriate pre-test.**

1.3.2 Progress Testing: Pre-Test and Post-Test

CASAS standardized progress tests are designed to assess learning along a continuum from beginning literacy and English language acquisition through completion of secondary level skills. There are several test series designed to monitor learning progress, with test difficulty levels ranging from below level A through level D.² Each test level has alternate test forms that are parallel in content and difficulty. The test series differ primarily in contextual focus (e.g. employability vs. general life skills and work skills).

² The reader is referred to the CASAS website at www.casas.org for a description of the CASAS levels.

The Iowa Department of Education encourages Iowa’s local adult literacy programs to select the test series based on the learners’ goals and the instructional focus of the program (secondary level completion, general life and work skills, employability, and workplace). Local programs are required to measure the educational gain of all students receiving 12 or more hours of instruction (Code of Federal Regulations Chapter 34, 462.40(c)(1)). *Suggested Next Test Charts* provided by CASAS or the Tracking of Programs and Students (TOPSpro) reporting system’s *Suggested Next Test* report by learner and class should be consulted to guide pre- and post-test selection.³ In addition, local programs should follow the CASAS recommended guidelines for required number of hours before post-testing.

Post-testing will occur at either the same level or a higher level, depending on the pre-test score. An alternate test form within the same test series must be used for post-testing. Additionally, the post-test must be in the same skills area as the pre-test, (i.e. programs cannot use a reading pre-test and a math post-test to determine learner gains.) **Post-testing policies and procedures will be discussed at greater length in a later section of this document.**

1.3.3 Assessments for Different Types of Learners

In general, the Iowa Department of Education recommends that the CASAS assessment instruments listed in Table 3 be used with identified adult learner sub-populations (i.e. low level literacy immigrants, refugees, developmentally disabled, GED candidates, etc.).

Table 3

CASAS Series Approved for Use by WIA Funded Local Agencies

CASAS ASSESSMENT Series	Citizenship	Employability Competency System	Life and Work	Life Skills	POWER	Secondary Assessment	Workforce Learning Systems (WLS)	
What basic skills are assessed in each series?								
Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Standardized Multiple Choice</i>
Math		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Listening		✓		✓			✓	
Writing		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	<i>Standardized Performance Based</i>
Speaking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Which programs use what series?								
ESL	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
ABE		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
ASE		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Source: CASAS, 2005

³ The reader is referred to the CASAS website at www.casas.org for a description of the TOPSpro reporting system.

Tables 4A and 4B depict the relationship between CASAS levels, CASAS test levels, scale score ranges and NRS levels for ABE/ASE and ESL learners. Table 4A depicts the relationship between CASAS and the NRS levels for ABE/ASE learners. Table 4B depicts the relationship between CASAS and the NRS levels for ESL learners.

Scoring and Alignment with NRS Levels

Table 4A

CASAS Relationship to NRS Levels for ABE

NRS Level		CASAS Level	Reading and Math Scale Score Ranges	Functional Writing Scale Score Ranges
1	Beginning ABE Literacy	A	200 and below	136* - 200
2	Beginning Basic Education	B	201-210	201 – 225
3	Low Intermediate Basic Education	B	211-220	226 - 242
4	High Intermediate Basic Education	C	221-235	243 - 260
5	Low Adult Secondary Education	D	236-245	261 - 270
6	High Adult Secondary Education	E	246 and above	271 and above

* Estimated score below the accurate range

Source: CASAS, 2005

Table 4B

CASAS Relationship to NRS Levels for ESL

NRS Level		CASAS Level	Reading and Listening Scale Score Ranges	Functional Writing Scale Score Ranges
1	Beginning ESL Literacy	A	180 and below	136*
2	Beginning ESL	A	181-200	146 - 200
3	Low Intermediate ESL	B	201-210	201 – 225
4	High Intermediate ESL	B	211-220	226 - 242
5	Low Advanced ESL	C	221-235	243 - 260
6	High Advanced ESL	D	236-245	261 - 270

* Estimated score below the accurate range

Source: CASAS, 2005

1.4 Resources for Information and Assistance

Individuals requiring information or assistance related to assessment policy or procedures in the Iowa Department of Education should contact:

- Alex Harris, Amy Vybiral or Phyllis Hinton, Iowa Department of Education, (alex. harris@iowa.gov, amy.vybiral@iowa.gov, or phyllis.hinton@iowa.gov).
- Linda Taylor, Director of Assessment Development, at CASAS may be contacted for more specific information about CASAS assessments (800-255-1036, ext. 186, or ltaylor@casas.org).

2.0 General Assessment Requirements

2.1 Learners to be Assessed

All learners reported in the National Reporting System must be assessed utilizing Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) approved standardized assessments. The Iowa Department of Education has authorized the CASAS standardized assessments presented in Table 3 for use in Iowa's adult literacy program. Local programs are required to measure the educational gain of all students receiving 12 or more hours of instruction (Code of Federal Regulations Chapter 34, 462.40(c)(1)).

2.2 Assessments Permitted

All assessments listed in Table 3 meet NRS requirements. Additionally, CASAS assessments:

- are appropriate for measuring literacy and language development of adult learners;
- have standardized administration and scoring-procedures;
- have alternate, equivalent, forms for pre- and post-testing; and
- have evidence linking them to the NRS Educational Functioning Levels.

For more specific information refer to Table 5A-5G.

2.2.1 Uniform Test Administration Times

The majority of CASAS Assessments have appraisal tests which should be given prior to administering a pre-test. Appraisal tests indicate the appropriate level for instruction, as well as which pre-test form should be given. Learners should take a pre-test as soon as possible upon entry into the program and before any substantial instructional intervention has occurred. Learners should be assessed in the areas that are the focus of instruction, using the appropriate CASAS standardized assessment in reading, math, writing, speaking, or listening comprehension. Iowa's adult literacy programs should administer post-tests, using an alternate form, at the end of the semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction to document learning gains. The time between the pre-test and administering the post-test should be adequate enough to allow the test to measure educational gains (Code of Federal Regulations Chapter 34, 462.40(c)(3)(iii)). CASAS recommends post-assessing after approximately 70-100 hours of instruction. However, programs offering:

- **High** intensity courses (e.g. class meets more than 15 hours per week) may choose to test at the end of the semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, even though the instructional intervention is more than 100 hours of instruction.
- **Low** intensity courses with less than 70 hours in a semester, term, quarter, or other substantial block of instruction, may choose to post-test at the end of the instructional period. Appropriate post-test time frames may also be determined by the instructor and adult learner.

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

The major factors that affect learning gains include: (1) intensity and duration of instructions, (2) motivation of learners, (3) competence of instruction, (4) the link between learner goals and instruction, and (5) other instructional factors.

Post-test scores obtained at the end of a semester/reporting period may be used as a pre-test for the next reporting period, provided that the timeframe between reporting periods does not exceed 3-6 months. Similarly, the most recent assessment results for “stop outs” returning to adult literacy classes may be used provided that the last test administered does not exceed the same 3-6 month window. This guideline is designed to reduce or eliminate unnecessary testing.

Program personnel may wish to retest “stop outs” or adult learners returning the following reporting period if they have reason to believe that, during the learner’s absence or over the summer recess, a significant learning intervention occurred which may have invalidated the learner’s previous assessment results. Under such circumstances, re-testing is always an option.

Given the results of the relationship between CASAS and the 2002 GED test battery, it is recommended that adult learners preparing to complete the GED test battery post-test at CASAS levels D or E in the appropriate modality prior to taking the same modality GED subtest. The study results clearly demonstrate that adult learners who attain CASAS standard scores in Levels D and E have an 80-90% probability of passing the appropriate GED subtest.

2.2.2 Required Pre/Post Match Percentages

The Iowa Department of Education requires that Iowa’s adult literacy programs have pre-post percentage target benchmarks for the three major literacy instructional programs. This is reinforced in the original state plan and in the annual state plan extensions. Pre/post percentage requirements are determined annually based on prior year’s performance and are written in the state plan extension. Through required, local professional development, Adult Literacy Coordinators share the highlights of both the state and local plan extensions annually. The local plan is created following their receipt and review of our state plan extension. Within the local plan extension, there is required form on which coordinators must verify participation of staff in professional development that includes review of the State Assessment Policy and current state plan extension. For additional follow-up, all instructors and test

administrators may refer to the current program year’s Iowa State Plan Extension for benchmark information.

Iowa establishes an annual pre/post test state benchmark by instructional program that is required of all local programs. Following, are the percentages for PY 2012:

STATE BENCHMARKS Pre/post Assessment by Instructional Program	*PY 10 Percent Attainment for Total Enrollment	**PY 11 Percent Projection	PY 12 Percent Projection
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	40%	40%	40%
English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)	30%	30%	30%
Adult Secondary Education (ASE)	35%	35%	35%

2.2.3 Testing for Certification

For programs that are using the Citizenship Interview Test for certification, follow the guidelines in the Citizenship Interview Test Manual. If retesting is necessary, a significant amount of intervening instructional hours must occur before retesting.

2.3 Training for Administering Assessments

Training is essential to a quality CASAS implementation. CASAS assessments may not be used in Iowa’s local adult literacy programs where the instructional staff have not undergone CASAS training by certified personnel. For a detailed discussion of CASAS trainings, training requirements and procedures, refer to **Section 3, Guidelines for Each Assessment**.

For local training purposes, instructions may be permitted to examine CASAS tests for review purposes only. It is essential, however, that this be done in a controlled, supervised environment with test security safeguards in place. Special care should be taken to ensure that all test booklets are collected at the completion of training.

2.4 Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities or Other Special Needs

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

2.4.1 Local Adult Education Agencies

Iowa’s local adult literacy programs are responsible for providing fully accessible services and for ensuring that these services meet reasonable criteria. Adult learners with disabilities are responsible for requesting accommodations and for submitting documentation of their disability at the time of registration, program entry, or after diagnosis. The need to use an accommodation should be documented in official learner records, such as the Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The documentation must show that the disability interferes with the learner’s ability to demonstrate performance on the test: This information can come from: (1) doctor’s report, (2) diagnostic assessment from a certified professional, and (3) other clinical records. The local adult literacy program can often contact the local division of vocational rehabilitation to request documentation of a disability.

2.4.2 Accommodations in Test Administration Procedures

Local test administrators may provide or allow some accommodations in test administration procedures or environment for documented disabilities without contacting CASAS, (e.g. accommodations in test time, giving supervised breaks, or providing a sign language interpreter for test administration directions only.) It is not an appropriate accommodation in test administration procedures to read a CASAS reading test to a learner with low literacy skills or blindness.

2.4.3 Use of Appropriate CASAS Test Forms

CASAS test forms that are appropriate for learners with a disability include: (1) computer-based tests and large-print tests, such as the Employability Competency System (ECS) and Life and Work reading pre- and post-tests, and (2) tests with enhanced print such as the Life Skills Beginning Literacy Reading Assessment and Reading for Citizenship test forms. CASAS Functional Auditory and Braille tests to measure basic literacy skills for learners who are blind or have a visual impairment are in development.

The paper Guidelines for Providing Accommodations Using *CASAS Assessment for Learners with Disabilities* provides more detailed information on providing accommodations. This document is available at www.casas.org.

3.0 Guidelines for Each Assessment

3.1 Test Administration Manuals. The Iowa Department of Education requires that local adult literacy programs follow the test administration guidelines in each Test Administration Manual published by CASAS for each test series used. All local adult literacy programs are required to maintain copies of TAMs onsite for all assessments used. TAMs provide quality control guidelines to ensure proper test utilization, administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. TAMs typically contain information about the following:

- The CASAS Assessment System;
- Overview of CASAS Progress Testing;
- Description of Tests;
- Determining Pre- and Post-Test Level;
- Test Security;
- Instructions for Administering Tests;
- Scoring;
- Data Collection;
- Interpretation of Results;
- Curriculum Planning, Instruction and Assessment;
- Resources;
- Testing Accommodations;
- Skill Level Descriptors;
- Suggested Next Test Charts;
- Answer Keys and Score Conversion Charts (for converting raw scores to scale scores);
- Learner Profile Sheets;
- Learner Performance by Competency;
- Class Profile by Competency.

3.2 Information to Be Included for Each Assessment

Table 3 provides information about which assessments are appropriate for designated learner populations. Tables 5A through 5G provide information on CASAS test forms by skill areas, levels and series. At each level multiple forms are listed; these are alternate forms for post-testing. In some instances an X follows a test form number (e.g. 32X). These tests are extended range tests and may be used as an additional post-test within that specified level (for example, 32 and 32X are alternative forms for 31—all at level A). Table 6 also lists the appropriate appraisal test (or tests) to accompany different CASAS test series.

Tables 5A -5G: CASAS Test Forms by Skill Areas, Levels, and Series

Table 5A

Reading (R) (ABE/ABE/ESL)

CASAS Level	Life Skills Series	Life & Work Series	ECS Series	WLS Series	Citizenship Series
Beg. Literacy	27 28	27 28	27 28		27 28
A	31 32	81 82	11 12		951 952
AX	32 X	81 X 82 X			951 X 952 X
B	33 34	83 84	13 14 114	213 214	
BX	34 X				
C	35 36	85, 86* 185 186	15 16 116	215 216	Secondary Assessment Series
D	37 38	187 188	17 18	217 (id) 218 (id)	513 514

Appraisal	20 or 30	20, 30, 120 or 130	120 or 130	220 or 230
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*workplace focused
id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5B**Math (M) (ABE/ASE)**

CASAS Level	Life Skills Series	ECS Series	WLS Series	Secondary Assessment
A	31 32	11 12		
B	33 34	13 14	213 214	
C	35 36	15 16	215 216	
D	37 38	17 18	217 (id) 218 (id)	505 506

Appraisal	30	120 or 130	220 or 230	
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id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5C**Listening (L) (ESL)**

CASAS Level	Life Skills Series	Life and Work Series	ECS and WLS Series
A	51 52	(id)	51 52
B	53 54	(id)	63 64
C	55 56	(id)	65 66

Appraisal	20	(id)	20
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id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5D**Writing (W) (ABE/ASE/ESL)**

CASAS Level	Form #	Task	Notes
A - D	410 411	Form Form	Tests “filling out a form” (consumable)
A - D	460 461 462 463	Pictures: Grocery Store (revised) Accident (revised) Department Store (revised) Street Scene (revised)	Prompts are laminated and reusable Tests “writing a narrative”
A - D	464 465 466	Workplace Pictures: Restaurant Warehouse Hotel	Prompt is laminated and reusable Tests “writing a narrative”
A	430 431	Inventory Inventory	Package of test sheets includes test administration directions Tests “filling out a simple inventory form” (consumable)
A	440 441	Note Note	Package of test sheets includes test administration directions Tests “writing a short note” (consumable)
B - D	450	Letter	Write letter to a mayor

id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5E**Speaking (S) (ESL)**

CASAS Level	Form #	Series	Content
A - D	973 974	Citizenship	Simulates USCIS oral citizenship interview
A - D	820 821	WLS	Assesses speaking ability in workplace contexts, including workplace safety and customer service

id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5F**Government and History for Citizenship (C) (ESL)**

CASAS Level	Form #	Series	Content
B – C	963 964	Citizenship	Multiple-choice questions Tests knowledge of U.S. government and history

id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2009, highlights reflect NRS approved tests

Table 5G**Special Needs (for learners with developmental disabilities)**

CASAS Level	POWER	Adult Life Skills (R)
Beginning Literacy	305	27 28
AA	Workplace & Employability Skills	310 311
AAA	303 Community Access	320 321
AAAA	301 (id) Independent Living	332 331
AAAAA		342 343*

id = in development

Source: CASAS, 2005

3.3 Training Requirements for Administering the CASAS Assessments

The Iowa Dept. of Education State Staff Consultant, designated State Trainers and local Adult Literacy Coordinators collaborate regarding the scheduling and implementation of training in CASAS assessment to ensure: (1) accurate use of tests, (2) appropriate interpretation of learner results, and (3) maintain the integrity and quality of the assessment process. CASAS requires that minimally one person from each institution using the CASAS system successfully completes the CASAS Implementation Training. This individual, once trained, can train others within his/her respective institution but may not train outside of that institution.

Iowa local programs and the Iowa Dept. of Education consider initial and ongoing training of those administering CASAS assessments to be vital to the accuracy and consistency of how students are assessed in Iowa. The program year begins with the ABE Institute which includes professional development related to CASAS assessments, TOPSpro, NRS updates, legislative issues and other topics pertinent to the success of the local programs.

When a new local program coordinator begins employment, he/she receives one-on-one training from Dept. of Education staff. In addition, the new coordinators are encouraged to attend the summer CASAS Institute to learn as much as possible about the assessments. Ongoing professional development and support are provided informally through emails and phone calls and formally through training opportunities. The local plan extensions require that coordinators detail the dates and times of CASAS local trainings, content and who attended. In addition, the Data and Assessment Consultant visits each local program to provide technical assistance related to CASAS, TOPSpro and NRS. The training provided during these visits is customized and intense.

Separate CASAS Implementation Trainings have been developed for ABE/ASE, ESL, and Employability Skills. These trainings focus on teaching participants to administer, score, and interpret CASAS reading, listening, and math assessments. Implementation Trainings also address how to use the CASAS competency system as well as how to use CASAS resources such as Quick Search to facilitate instruction. Separate trainings are available in CASAS Functional Writing, Providing Options for the Workplace Education and Rehabilitation (POWER) (for developmentally disabled adults), Citizenship and Workplace Speaking, among others. The Iowa Department of Education requires all local adult literacy programs to comply with the CASAS training policy presented above.

Iowa's adult literacy program utilizes a staff development cadre approach to ensure that personnel who have access to CASAS assessments are properly trained and certified. Each staff development cadre member is CASAS certified at either the state or national level in their respective training area (e.g. POWER, ESL, Initial Implementation Training, Workforce Learning Systems (WLS), Writing Assessment, TOPSpro, etc.)

3.4 Post-Testing

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

3.5 Guidelines for Raw Score Conversion to Scale Scores and Using Scale Scores to Place Learners in NRS Levels

Each CASAS Test Administration Manual provides charts and guidelines for converting raw scores to scale scores. The Iowa Department of Education requires Iowa's local adult literacy programs to use these as reference points. The CASAS scale has been subdivided into ranges that correspond to the NRS levels. NRS guidelines prescribe that learners whose pre-tests place them in different instructional categories (i.e. reading and math) be placed in the area with the lower score if the learner is to receive instruction in the skill related to the lower instructional level. Placement at the lower instructional level should be the basis of determining which pre-test to administer.

3.6 Test Security Agreements

The Iowa Department of Education requires that all funded adult literacy programs sign assurance, certifications, and an annual test security agreement included in the local program plan. This agreement includes the following stipulations:

- The local adult education program director assumes responsibility for safeguarding all CASAS-developed assessment materials, including Test Administration Manuals, and answer sheets (which contain certain marks or responses);
- All CASAS materials are stored in a locked (preferably fireproof) file cabinet accessible to the program director or his/her designee(s);
- Staff administering assessments should return all materials immediately after use to the program director or his/her designees;
- All answer sheets and writing samples are treated as confidential until destroyed;
- No duplication of any test form or any portion of any test form is permitted for any reason;
- Inventory information concerning CASAS materials will be supplied to the Iowa Department of Education when requested;
- Defaced materials may not be destroyed unless authorized by Iowa Department of Education;
- Programs may not use displays, questions, or answers that appear on any CASAS test to create materials designed to teach or prepare learners to answer CASAS test items. Instead, programs should use instructional resources provided by CASAS (e.g. Quick Search and other support materials) to link curriculum, assessment and instruction.
- State of Iowa authorization for web-based data transition and assessment.

3.7 Quality Control Procedures

The following procedures ensure quality control:

3.7.1 Entry of Data: The Iowa Department of Education requires sub-grantees enter data for all students served with AEFLA funding or required match. The IDE requires that local programs enter all assessment item level response data into TOPSpro and/or web-based Enterprise. The IDE expressly prohibits the deletion or withholding of data without authorization and documentation from the Iowa Department of Education.

3.7.2 Quality Control Procedures: The Iowa Department of Education has the following quality control procedures in place to ensure that appropriate assessment procedures have been followed: [examples include replication, data integrity checks, system logic to prevent inappropriate assessments being entered, incorrect scale score gains, data verification procedures, etc.] The TOPSpro system includes a variety of data integrity protocols. Local program data is entered daily using

TOPSpro. The data is uploaded quarterly to the Iowa Department of Education FTP secure site (EdInfo) by local coordinators for state aggregation (beginning January, 2012). The local TOPSpro Specialist can run reports on demand and share them as a PDF document with coordinators and instructors. Coordinators are encouraged to review and verify their data weekly and share information with staff. Local programs are on a three year rotating monitoring visit cycle which includes random data sample from local data sets which are matched with program record keeping data (such as date of entry, modification, etc) and other local paper systems (such as attendance sheets). Local programs are required to enter data

3.7.3 Purchasing Procedures for Each Assessment: The Iowa Department of Education authorizes local adult literacy programs to order CASAS assessments authorized for use in Iowa directly from CASAS (with the exception of web-based testing units or eTesting online until Iowa has fully transitioned to web based testing. Each sub-grantee currently has an allocation of WTU's with CASAS which will be released as Iowa fully implements web based testing through fiscal year 2012 and 2013 after establishing security and assurances, program and state wide). The Iowa Department of Education provides CASAS with a list of approved assessments to ensure that local adult education programs order appropriate materials.

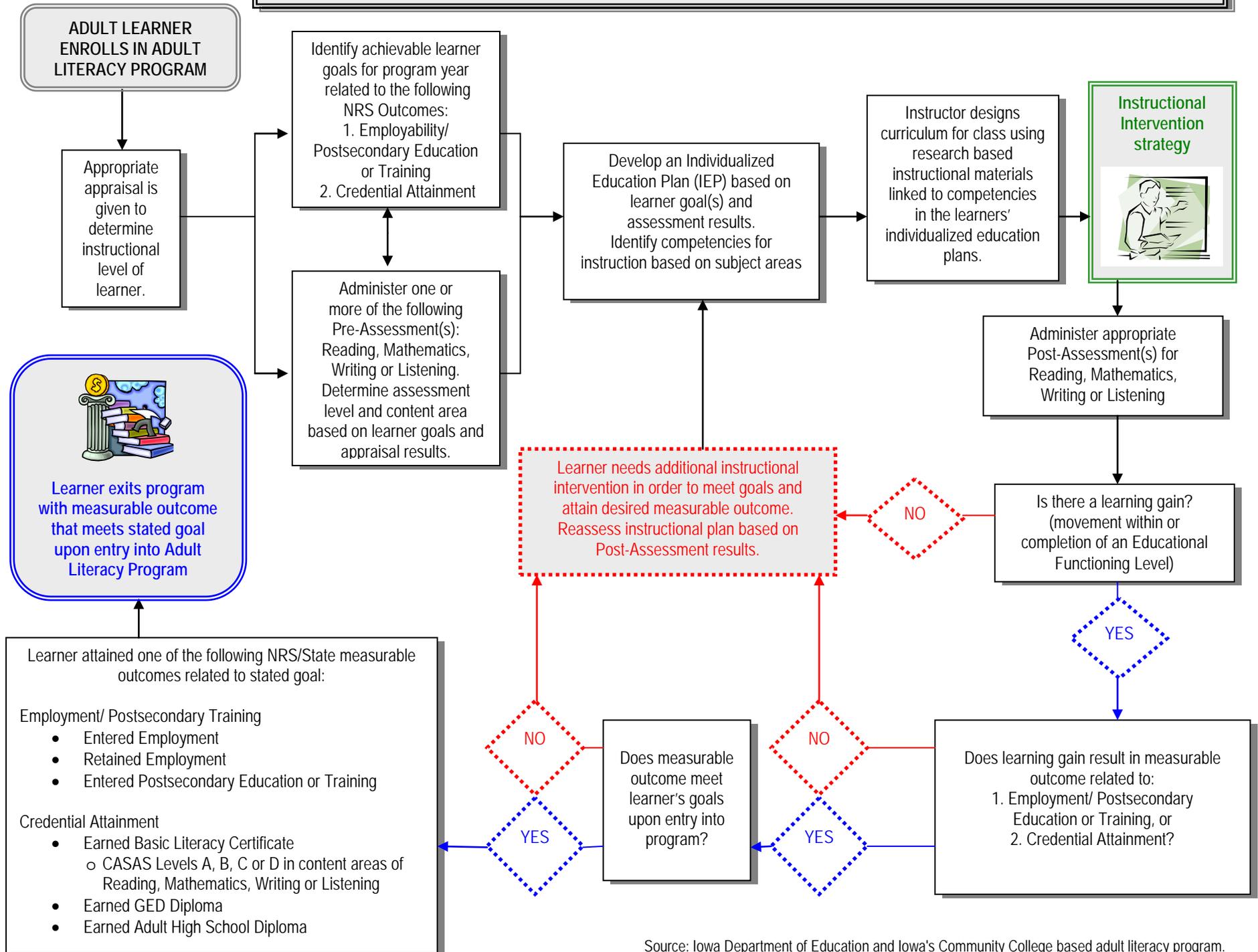
4.0 Assessment Instrument Alignment

Iowa's adult literacy program utilizes CASAS for all standardized assessment procedures for reporting NRS educational gain benchmarks. It should be noted that the CASAS assessment component is only part of the total picture to ensure that adult enrollees and program goals are successfully achieved. In order for the assessment process to be an integral part of the total adult literacy program, the skills being assessed must be in alignment with the following components: (1) content standards, (2) curriculum, (3) instruction, (4) enrollee goals, (5) program outcomes and (6) federal and state reporting requirements. One of the hall marks of CASAS is the alignment of the above listed components. Given that Iowa's adult literacy program has fully implemented all aspects of CASAS, the above listed components are fully aligned which constitutes a seamless program system. The following graphics illustrate the alignment process.

The graphic titled *Flowchart Depicting Adult Learner Process through an Adult Literacy Program to Achieve Learner Goal/Program Outcome* illustrates the process by which adult learners achieve personal/educational goals and how those goals are reported in terms of program outcomes and benchmark attainment. The graphic titled *The CASAS System: Formula for Success* displays the alignment among the following program components: (1) research, (2) professional development, (3) curriculum, (4) assessment, (5) instruction, (6) data collection and reporting, and (7) accountability factors.

Iowa's adult literacy program's continuous improvement model underscores the assessment, instruction and curriculum development process. Assessment plays a key role in quantifying continuous program improvement efforts.

Adult Learner Progress through an Adult Literacy Program to Achieve Learner Goal / Program Outcome



The CASAS System: *Formula for Success*

