



Nebraska Assessment Policy

Distance Education Policy

Program Year 2020 – 2021

Effective July 1, 2020

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Welcome to Nebraska Adult Education

The Nebraska Department of Education is the State Education Agency (SEA) eligible to receive Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funding directly from the United States Department of Education. With the authorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Adult Education serves Nebraska residents as Title II of a federal partnership focused on high quality education and workforce preparation activities.

Nebraska Adult Education and the Nebraska Department of Education are fully committed to preparing all Nebraskans for learning, earning and living. Our Adult Education program will:

- Promote proactive leadership to improve opportunities for adult learners
- Develop partnerships that support Nebraskan's learning needs
- Provide opportunities to receive fair, equitable and high quality education activities
- Provide access to positive transition through all phases of learning and into civic life
- Promote access to quality professional development for all adult education instructors
- Prepare adult learners to be college, career and civic ready

PY21 Adult Education Providers:

Nebraska Adult Education programs are located throughout the State. The following providers administer our program in select onsite classrooms and through distance education opportunities:

- Central Community College
- Crete Public Schools
- Metropolitan Community College
- Mid-Plains Community College
- Nebraska Department of Correctional Services
- Northeast Community College
- Plattsmouth Community Schools
- Southeast Community College
- Western Nebraska Community College

OVERVIEW

As Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the purpose of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act is to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy activities, in order to:

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain education and skills that are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children and lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family;
- Assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, through career pathways;
- Assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in improving their reading, writing, speaking and comprehension skills in English and mathematics skills and acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom and the responsibilities of citizenship.

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

To successfully achieve the goals of Adult Education, consistent and accurate assessment is required. The consistent administration of test assessment as well as the accurate interpretation of the results is necessary to improve student retention and promote Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gain. EFL gain is the method used to measure a student's progress and success and to ensure that students are learning effectively.

Adult learners enter Adult Education programs in a wide range of educational functioning levels. The use of standardized assessments is essential to ensure that all adult education students are placed in the appropriate EFL and receive the appropriate level of instruction. Assessment also provides a guide for the selection of effective curriculum to meet the learning needs of the student.

The NRS mandates students' assessment in Adult Education programs specifically to determine EFL gain. NRS identifies twelve Educational Functioning Levels in its accountability measures. Six (6) Adult Basic Education (ABE) levels; and six (6) English as a Second Language (ESL) levels.

Each Educational Functioning level addresses a general set of standards and competencies that adults must demonstrate to move to the next EFL; thus making a gain. These standards can be found in the New Educational Functioning Level Descriptors for Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, located in the NRS Technical Assistance Guide

NEED FOR ASSESSMENT

Nebraska Adult Education, as a federally funded adult education and literacy program, must consistently evaluate whether students are learning efficiently and effectively. To accomplish this requirement, the effective use of standardized assessments is paramount to success. Nebraska Adult Education, therefore requires the use of the federally approved standardized assessments outlined in this policy and does not allow or approve the use of any other assessment tool to determine placement or Educational Functioning Level gain.

Furthermore, to align with regulations and guidance issued by the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), approved assessments are an accountability measure to report student data. Student data is achieved through the initial pre-test and placement of each individual, analysis of the student's strengths and areas needing improvement, monitoring of progress and determination of learning and improvement through post-assessment.

Student performance data is also used as a program evaluation tool. Performance outcomes and trends can help identify professional development and training needs.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Test validity is the degree to which a test or assessment accurately measures the content it was designed to measure.

Test reliability is the degree to which a test or assessment gives consistent (reliable) results each time it is used.

Both test validity and reliability are important since the goal is to provide a wide range of learning opportunities and to ensure that the student learning is beneficial and student data is as accurate as possible.

AEFLA SUBRECIPIENT ASSESSMENT ASSURANCES

As the State Agency administering the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Nebraska Department of Education, Adult Education section has developed this assessment policy as a guide to the federal and state-imposed requirements for all local program providers receiving AEFLA funding. Included in this assessment policy is the Nebraska Adult Education, Distance Education policy.

The Nebraska Assessment Policy is designed to identify assessment policies required for all local program providers (subrecipients) of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funding and provide clear guidance for local program responsibilities specific to the National Reporting System. All AEFLA funded grant recipients are required to adhere to these policies in the administration and delivery of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act activities and services.

The National Reporting System (NRS) is the accountability system for the federally funded, State-administered Adult Education program. Student assessment data and information are reported federally through the State's Management Information System (MIS), LACES, by all program providers on an annual basis.

Program providers of Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services must ensure that:

- The provider is in full compliance with 34 CFR Part 462
- All students entering Nebraska Adult Education first complete a Student Enrollment Form
- All students served under AEFLA are entered into the NRS-MIS, LACES
- All student information and data is entered in LACES in a timely manner
- The provider is administering a pre-test and post-test according to this policy
- The provider is effectively serving all twelve Education Functioning Levels (EFLs)
- The provider is efficiently transitioning students between each of the 12 EFLs
- The provider is not charging eligible students for participation
- The provider is successfully transitioning students to postsecondary education, training and/or employment through Career Pathways.

MEASURABLE SKILL GAIN

Measurable skill gain (MSG) is used to demonstrate participants' progress toward achieving a credential or employment. For adult education programs, participants can demonstrate MSG in two ways; Educational Functioning Level (EFL) gain and receipt of a secondary school diploma (GED®).

EFL gain can be demonstrated in two ways:

1. Comparing a participant's pretest with the posttest, using an approved assessment for use in the NRS.
2. Enrollment in postsecondary education or training after exit.

Receipt of a secondary school diploma can be demonstrated by achieving a passing score on the GED® Exam.

NRS - Educational Functioning Levels

Educational Functioning Levels	
ABE	ESL
ABE Level 1	ESL Level 1
ABE Level 2	ESL Level 2
ABE Level 3	ESL Level 3
ABE Level 4	ESL Level 4
ABE Level 5	ESL Level 5
ABE Level 6	ESL Level 6

SUMMARY

While standardized tests are required for all students enrolled in Nebraska Adult Education and used to identify a student's Educational Functioning Level placement and subsequent gain, it is recommended that local programs use additional, informal tests such as; chapter tests, assessments found in instructional curriculum, self-made tests, etc. to further prepare students and more accurately identify subject areas that are challenging for students.

Assessment of a student's abilities should be presented as a motivational and positive practice. Students should be given clear guidance and instructions during enrollment that assessments are used to show academic progress and growth and that each student will be assessed at various intervals through their participation in Adult Education.

It is imperative that all Nebraska Adult Education instructional staff adapt an educational planning process with students, which will aid in student transition to a secondary credential and postsecondary education, training or employment.

Through best practices and assurances by program providers, students entering Nebraska Adult Education programs are ensured accurate assessment of their academic abilities. Programs will develop an individualized learning plan for every student entering Nebraska Adult Education to assist students in achieving their educational goals in an efficient and effective manner.

CAREER PATHWAYS

Career Pathways activities were established in 2016 by the State Office. All providers receiving AEFLA funding are required to administer specific Career Pathways preparation activities to students entering Nebraska Adult Education programs and classrooms.

All students entering Nebraska Adult Education programs must be provided with the following activities upon completion of the initial student registration and orientation:

- Career Pathways Intake and Interview
- ONET Career Interest Inventory
- Learning Styles Inventory
- CASAS® Pre-Assessment

Career Pathways activities are entered into LACES as non-instructional time and programs must strive to complete these activities prior to administering the pre-assessment.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

All students entering a Nebraska Adult Education program must first complete a Student Enrollment Form before receiving a pre-assessment. Once completed, all students must be given a pre-assessment during Program Enrollment and Assessment, prior to classroom instruction and a post-assessment at the designated interval to determine Educational Functioning Level gain. All participants served under AEFLA will be entered into the State's National Reporting System Management Information System (NRS MIS), LACES.

The only assessments approved in Nebraska Adult Education are:

•CASAS® Assessments

All students must receive the appropriate CASAS® assessment based on the student's level.

English as a Second Language

- Life and Work Reading (80 Series)
- Life and Work Listening (980 Series)

Adult Basic and Secondary Education

- Reading GOALS
- Math GOALS

Pre-Assessment

A pre-assessment must be given to all students entering Nebraska Adult Education programs during Program Enrollment and Assessment and before any instructional class hours begin.

The pre-assessment is to be administered for:

1. determination of eligibility for AEFLA services
2. placement into the appropriate educational functioning level (EFL)
3. placement in the appropriate class within the local program
4. determining appropriate student learning and transition goals
5. determining appropriate instructional materials for the student

Students will automatically be placed into an Educational Functioning Level that corresponds to the lowest subject area of their pre-assessment when the scores are entered in LACES.

If a student exits the program and then returns, a new pre-assessment will only be required if more than 180 days has passed since the previous assessment.

The most recent CASAS Assessment may be moved forward from PY20 to PY21 as long as the student is in a continuous period of participation and the assessment was taken after June 30, 2019.

The time spent by students on pre-assessment must be entered as **CAREER PATHWAYS NON-I** time in LACES.

Post-Assessment

Students must be administered a CASAS® post-assessment within the required range of instructional hours. Required hours of instruction ranges are listed under each approved assessment section below and in Appendix C.

Programs are responsible for post-testing a minimum of 60% of all participants each program year.*

* Programs not meeting this requirement must submit a progress improvement plan on a quarterly basis to the State Office. As a state-imposed requirement, programs consistently failing to meet the State's post-test rate are subject to corrective action and/or sanction of AEFLA funding.

According to the test publisher, CASAS, the minimum number of instructional hours prior to post-assessment is 40 hours. **Early post-testing is not allowed in Program Year 2021.**

Those classes with intensive instruction where students can achieve the minimum number of hours to post-test within a matter of weeks, should post-test no more than once every 90 days. If a student is expected to exit the program, the student must have the minimum number of hours to post-test

NOTE: Random and frequent testing will not present a valid gain and could create a practice effect, thus producing questionable results. **Therefore, random and frequent testing by programs is not allowed.**

After the initial post-test, continued post-testing is required until the student reaches ABE Level 6 in CASAS® **Reading and Math** GOALS. Students cannot re-post-test until accrued instructional hours fall within the required hour range to post-test.

A student will not need to post-test if they pre-test into ABE Level 6.

Students who already have a high school diploma or a GED® and are in need of basic skills improvement will continue to post-test until they reach ABE Level 6.

Students must receive their pre-and post-tests either in the classroom / learning center or remotely-and can be administered only by qualified test personnel. No dictionaries, translators, or other resource materials can be used by the student during testing. The tests are not to be used as a study tool. CASAS procedures must be closely followed during test administration.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students entering Nebraska Adult Education with specific accommodation requests must self-identify and present those accommodations requests at the time of registration or during the course of Program Enrollment and Assessment. If accommodation requests are identified at a later time during enrollment, every effort will be made to accommodate the needs of the students.

Documentation of student disability will aid in the delivery of accommodations to the student. Students should submit documentation related to their disability and/or accommodation request. Adult Education staff are not required to request disability documentation on behalf of the student. All documentation received by Nebraska Adult Education program staff will be managed in a secure manner to ensure that the privacy of the student is maintained. Accommodations used during the program should be included in the student's learning plan.

Those persons with a documented disability are allowed to use approved accommodations during pre- and post-testing, as specified in the assessment testing manual. These accommodations can be used during instruction as well.

Additional Accommodations

In addition to specific accommodations provided by the assessment publishers during pre- and post-testing, the following accommodations to students with documented disabilities enrolling in Adult Education classes may also be available:

- Assistive devices and equipment that enhance visual / auditory response
- Flexible scheduling
- Flexible seating
- Sign language interpreters (for test administration directions only)
- Braille format

Test administrators must always verify with the assessment publisher to determine if specific accommodations are allowable.

When necessary, Adult Education staff should seek additional guidance and support from agencies that provide additional accommodations support to students entering Adult Education.

Every effort must be made to accommodate students with disabilities. Should an available assessment accommodation or alternative accommodation offered not be of substantial assistance to benefit the student, documentation of all attempts should be included in LACES and in the student's transition plan, which is located as part of the Career Pathways Intake Form.

WIOA Core Partner agencies providing accommodations assistance include:

- Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
- Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

GED® Testing Service Accommodations

www.gedtestingservice.com

Pearson Vue Comfort Aid List

www.pearsonvue.com/documents/accomodations

CASAS Accommodations

<https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/testing-guidelines/accommodations-guidelines>

DATA QUALITY AND COLLECTION

All AEFLA funded grant recipients serving Nebraska Adult Education are responsible for accurate data collection. All data collected by programs must be entered into LACES.

Each Adult Education program must create a written data collection policy with clear procedures to be followed in each instructional setting. Each data collection policy should reflect best practices in effective and efficient data collection and contain a procedure to monitor and evaluate the collection of data on an ongoing basis. A copy of the data collection policy for each AEFLA funded program must be submitted to the State Office.

Programs are required to record daily student attendance through the use of physical student sign-in sheets with student signatures. Student sign-in sheets will then be used to validate the student instructional / non-instructional hours entered into LACES to ensure the accurate recording of student hours.

Student hours will be entered into LACES in a timely manner, with the goal of daily attendance; or at a minimum, weekly. Providers are highly encouraged to allow instructional staff opportunities to enter student attendance for their own students. Programs that fail to enter student hours into LACES in a timely manner will be subject to a program improvement plan and possible corrective action.

Program Directors are required to verify student data through an established quality control process to avoid false or duplicate data from being entered into LACES.

Local program staff members who gather, analyze, compile and report on student data for NRS must be properly trained on the assessment policy and performance measures related to the collection of data.

Local programs will develop a timeline and procedure for training new staff and maintain a record of trained staff to be reviewed periodically or by request from the State Office.

TEST ADMINISTRATORS TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All local program staff responsible for administering a student assessment must receive training prior to administering any assessment to a student.

CASAS® requires all test administrators to complete online training available on the CASAS® website. All certificates of training completion must be submitted to the State Office.

The State Office will provide ongoing support and training for program providers as needed.

Assessment Policy training will be conducted by local Program Directors annually with all local program staff. Program Directors will ensure that local program staff have a copy of or access to the current version of the assessment policy. Program Directors must ensure that all assessment policies are followed and that student hours and assessment scores are accurately entered into LACES in a timely manner.

CASAS® provides online, self-paced coordinator and proctor certification modules available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Adult Education directors are required to share any testing changes and updates with their program and instructional staff and must provide a printed copy of the Assessment Policies to instructors in each classroom.

CASAS® ASSESSMENTS

Nebraska Adult Education, in the interest of ensuring uniform implementation across the state and to allow comparability across programs, requires all adult education program providers to use the CASAS® (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems) standardized assessments.

CASAS® test administration manuals for each test provide explicit guidelines for uniform implementation and interpretation of CASAS® assessment information. Directions for test administration, found in the Examiner's Manual, must be followed.

The use of CASAS eTests® Online is required across all programs. Paper and pencil testing will only be allowable when necessary and will require permission from the State Office. Special consideration will be given to corrections programs serving in secure facilities with limited or no access to the internet.

CASAS® assessments are norm-referenced tests designed to measure achievement of basic skills commonly found in adult education curricula and taught within the instructional programs.

The Individual Skills Profile (ISP), which tabulates scores for instructional purposes, provides the basis for demonstrating student educational gains. The tests also provide percentile and scale scores, along with grade equivalent scores.

Students entering all NRS Educational Functioning Levels must be given the appropriate CASAS® pre-assessment during Program Enrollment and Assessment.

Locator Tests

CASAS® combines a locator test along with the pre-test for one seamless testing session with CASAS eTests®. The locator will automatically determine and administer the recommended pre-assessment.

Other items to consider when determining the appropriate level of which CASAS® assessment to administer include:

- The student's ability to independently complete intake and registration forms
- The student's writing sample or ability to answer a pre-determined question in writing.
- The interview with the student to determine academic strengths and weaknesses, possible participation in special education/remedial classes, and/or diagnosed disabilities.

CASAS® Reading GOALS and Math GOALS are the only approved assessment for ABE Levels 1-6 in Nebraska Adult Education. No other assessment may be used for NRS reporting. See examiner's manual for complete test instructions.

NRS Level	Level Descriptors	CASAS® Reading GOALS Scale Score Ranges
ABE Level 1	Beginning Literacy	203 and Below
ABE Level 2	Beginning Basic	204 - 216
ABE Level 3	Low Intermediate	217 – 227
ABE Level 4	High Intermediate	228 – 238
ABE Level 5	Low Adult Secondary	239 – 248
ABE Level 6	High Adult Secondary	249 and above

Reading GOALS for ABE Levels 1-6			Timing
CASAS® Level	Form Number	Number of Items	Students have up to
A	901	39	60 Minutes
A	902	39	60 Minutes
B	903	40	75 Minutes
B	904	40	75 Minutes
C	905	40	75 Minutes
C	906	40	75 Minutes
D	907	40	75 Minutes
D	908	40	75 Minutes

NRS Level	Level Descriptors	CASAS® Math GOALS Scale Score Ranges
ABE Level 1	Beginning Literacy	193 and Below
ABE Level 2	Beginning Basic	194 - 203
ABE Level 3	Low Intermediate	204 – 214
ABE Level 4	Middle Intermediate	215 – 225
ABE Level 5	High Intermediate	226 – 235
ABE Level 6	Adult Secondary	236 and above

Note: Updated level descriptors for math

Math GOALS for ABE Levels 1-6			Timing
CASAS® Level	Form Number	Number of Items	Students have up to
A/B	913	40	60 Minutes
A/B	914	40	60 Minutes
C/D	917	38	75 Minutes
C/D	918	38	75 Minutes

English Language Learners, including those enrolled in IELCE are to be given CASAS® Life and Work Reading and CASAS® Life and Work Listening assessments upon entry into the program during Program Enrollment and Assessment and prior to the start of classroom instruction.

NRS ESL Level	Level Descriptors	Life and Work Reading 80 Series Scale Score Ranges	Life and Work Listening 980 Series Scale Score Ranges
ESL Level 1	Beginning ESL Literacy	180 and Below	180 and Below
ESL Level 2	Low Beginning ESL	181 - 190	181 - 189
ESL Level 3	High Beginning ESL	191 - 200	190 - 199
ESL Level 4	Low Intermediate ESL	201 - 210	200 - 209
ESL Level 5	High Intermediate ESL	211 - 220	210 - 218
ESL Level 6	Advanced ESL	221 - 235	219 - 227

** See Examiner's Manual for complete test instructions.*

Life and Work Reading			Timing
CASAS® Level	Form Number	Number of Test Items	Time per Test
A	*Form 27	30	60 Minutes
A	*Form 28	30	60 Minutes
A	Form 81	24	60 Minutes
A	Form 82	24	60 Minutes
A	**Form 81X	28	60 Minutes
A	**Form 82X	28	60 Minutes
B	Form 83	32	60 Minutes
B	Form 84	32	60 Minutes
C	†Form 85	37	60 Minutes
C	†Form 86	37	60 Minutes
C	Form 185	38	60 Minutes
C	Form 186	38	60 Minutes
D	Form 187	32	60 Minutes
D	Form 188	32	60 Minutes

**Forms 27 & 28 are beginning literacy competency-based tests that assess students whose literacy skills are the lowest levels.*

***Forms 81X and 82X are extended range tests that serve as a "bridge" between two levels.*

†Forms 85 and 86 are workplace-focused. All other tests in this series are a balance of life skills and employment-related content.

CASAS® Life and Work Listening assessments require students to listen and to record their responses either on the computer (for CASAS eTests®) or an answer sheet.

Life and Work Listening – 980 Series			
CASAS® Level	Form Number	Number of Test Items	Time per Test
A	Form 981	38	49 minutes
A	Form 982	38	49 minutes
B	Form 983	38	52 minutes
B	Form 984	38	52 minutes
C	Form 985	38	51 minutes
C	Form 986	38	51 minutes

Students scoring 236 or higher in the Life and Work Reading Assessment will be given the CASAS® Reading and Math GOALS assessments for ABE Levels 1-6 placement. Students scoring 228 or higher in the Life and Work Listening Assessment cannot move on to GOALS assessments until they also score 236 or higher in Life and Work Reading.

English Language Learners must be seamlessly transitioned from ESL Levels 1-6 to ABE Levels 1-6 through pre and post-testing.

Alternate form is required for post-assessment. CASAS eTests® automatically determine next tests.

Students will be placed into an Educational Functioning Level that corresponds to the lowest subject area of the student’s pre-assessments.

Scores are most reliable when they are within the content range of each level. If a student scores at the very low or very high end of the range, the student may need to be re-pre-tested to accurately determine Educational Functioning Level. Students scoring with an asterisk (*) indicating below accurate range, should be retested on a lower level assessment. If no lower level assessment is available, enter the raw score and the lowest scale score that LACES allows for that assessment.

If a second pre-test is administered, only that score will be entered into LACES. This score will determine EFL placement. The out-of-range pre-test score will not be entered.

If a student exits the program and is absent for at least 90 consecutive days, a new pre-assessment must be given if the initial pre-assessment was taken more than 180 days prior to the student’s return.

CASAS® is a progressive test, meaning that a person can progress from one level to the next higher level during post-testing. If a student pre-tests toward the high range or makes significant learning progress, post-testing on the next higher level would be appropriate.

Accommodations should be given only to those students who have a documented disability. If a student has been approved for accommodations because of a disability, these same accommodations apply to

the pre/post assessment. Instructors need to be familiar with the guidelines for providing accommodations during testing and instruction.

Scale scores, grade equivalent level, and EFL are determined at the time of pre-testing and are then entered into LACES. Scale scores or grade equivalent level can be used to indicate an EFL gain to a higher EFL. In cases where an EFL gain is not made, but there is some evidence of improvement in the scale score(s), the improvement should be shared with the student to promote success. Some incremental gain shows evidence of student learning.

All post-test scores, regardless of result must be entered into LACES.

A student is considered to have made an educational gain when the student’s post-test indicates that the student has completed one or more educational functioning levels (EFL) above the level in which the student was initially placed by pre-test score.

A post-test is not required when a student pre-tests into ABE Level 6. The successful completion of the GED® tests demonstrates the educational movement and a Measurable Skills Gain (MSG).

A CASAS® post-test must be administered within the required range of instructional hours. All students reaching the required hour range must be post-tested.

In order to meet the requirement for demonstrated effectiveness, it is important for instructors to post-test students when they have determined testing readiness. The minimum hour requirement between pre and post-test is 40 instructional hours. CASAS® recommends 70 – 100 instructional hours for students to show a learning gain. Students with at least 40 instructional hours should be post-tested when the instructor determines that the student is likely to make an educational functioning level gain.

See table below:

CASAS® Assessments Alternate Form Testing	Required Number of Instructional Hours Between Pre-Test and Post-Test	
	EFL LEVEL	Minimum – Maximum Hour Range Requirement
Life and Work Reading and Listening	ESL LEVELS 1 - 6	40 – 80 HOURS*
	ABE LEVELS 1 – 4	40 - 70 HOURS*
Reading GOALS Math GOALS	ABE LEVEL 5	40 - 60 HOURS*
	ABE LEVEL 6	12 HOURS (NO POST TEST)

*LACES Dashboard Student Alert: *Students eligible for post-testing aligns with the required 40 instructional hour minimum.*

Students in ABE Level 6 must have a minimum of 12 instructional hours to be counted in federal reporting. Providers must thoroughly explain to students the importance of academic preparation prior to pursuing the high school equivalency exam.

Early post-testing is not allowed in Program Year 2021.

Nebraska Performance Standard:

Programs are responsible for post-testing a minimum of 60% of all participants each program year.*

* Programs not meeting this requirement must submit a progress improvement plan on a quarterly basis to the State Office. As a state-imposed requirement, programs consistently failing to meet the State's post-test rate are subject to corrective action and/or sanction of AEFLA funding.

Technical Support

The CASAS® Technology Support Team is available 9:00 am – 7:00 pm (Central), M – F, at techsupport@casas.org to provide technical assistance for successful online implementation and uninterrupted test delivery. Technical support is also available at 1-800-255-1036, option 2.

ESL to ABE TRANSITION

Nebraska Adult Education providers receiving Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funding are required to serve all twelve Educational Functioning Levels identified in the NRS and upon completion of ESL Level 6, students move directly into ABE levels determined by their assessment score.

Students who score 236 or higher on the CASAS® Life and Work Reading test are ready for transition to Adult Basic Education. These students will be given the CASAS® **Reading and Math** GOALS assessments for ABE Levels 1-6 placement. All scores will be entered into LACES.

English Language Learners must be seamlessly transitioned from ESL Levels 1-6 to ABE Levels 1-6 through pre and post-testing. Deviation from serving all twelve EFLs seamlessly will constitute non-compliance with Nebraska Adult Education policies.

ATTENDANCE AND PERIODS OF PARTICIPATION

Providers of AEFLA funded Adult Education activities must ensure that local attendance policies do not inhibit a continuous Period of Participation or create unnecessary multiple Periods of Participation.

A student's participation in Adult Education is the determining factor of the number of periods of participation for each student. Local providers cannot institute attendance or performance requirements during a pre-determined period of time (i.e. college quarter or semester) that would force a student to "sit-out" of participation for a designated period of time. Nebraska Adult Education does not allow a penalty system for students who do not achieve a specified number of instructional hours in a designated period of time.

Additionally, programs receiving state and federal funding to administer Adult Education and Family Literacy activities must make every effort to avoid "waiting lists", forcing students to delay enrollment.

GED READY® and GED® POLICY

Nebraska Adult Education has established the following policy as a state-imposed requirement for all AEFLA funded providers also receiving Nebraska Rule 82 funding.

The GED Ready® is not an NRS approved assessment to determine EFL gain and is not a substitute for CASAS® post-testing. All programs must ensure timely and accurate pre- and post-testing of all participants enrolled. Students enrolled in ESL Levels 1-6 and ABE Levels 1-5 must be given the appropriate CASAS® assessment before GED Ready® and GED® testing can begin.

Per 34 CFR §462.40(c)(1), AEFLA program providers are required to measure the Educational Functioning Level gain of all participants. Bypassing NRS approved post-assessments for eligible participants and moving directly to the GED Ready® and GED® Official Exam will be considered non-compliant with the requirement above.

All students enrolled in AEFLA-funded, Nebraska Adult Education programs must pre- or post-test into ABE Level 6 via a CASAS® assessment, prior to taking the GED Ready®. Students who initially pre-test into ABE Level 6 must have a minimum of 12 instructional hours prior to scheduling their GED® exams. Students who pre- or post-test into ABE Level 6 and receive a “likely to pass” on the GED Ready® qualify to take the official GED® examination in that subject. Intake staff should work to clarify testing policies with students during onboarding activities. Programs should implement strategies to ensure appropriate and successful post-testing while also encouraging students to move toward high school equivalency completion.

GED Ready® and GED® Vouchers:

Beginning July 1, 2020, all AEFLA-funded subrecipients receiving Rule 82: The Diploma of High School Equivalency Assistance Act, funding will be required to set aside annually, an appropriate amount of funding to:

1. Purchase and Allocate all GED® Ready Practice Exams for all eligible students enrolled in Nebraska Adult Education programs.
2. Purchase and allocate all initial GED® Official Exams for all eligible students enrolled in Nebraska Adult Education programs.

To qualify for the free GED® exams, all participants must be enrolled in Nebraska Adult Education, be entered into LACES and qualify to sit for the exam per the current Nebraska Assessment Policy.



Distance Education Policy

Program Year 2020 – 2021

Effective July 1, 2020

Remote Learning

In response to the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, Nebraska Adult Education has expanded its efforts to continue serving students remotely, through web-based videoconferencing. Students who participate in adult education classes remotely accrue instructional hours in the same manner as a student sitting in a traditional classroom. Instructors are able to identify each student and deliver the appropriate level of instruction, even though the student and teacher are not physically present at the same location.

Remote learning differs from Distance Learning in two distinct ways. In distance learning:

- **Students learn through approved distance education curriculum or instructor provided assignments, at their own pace and do not synchronously interact with an instructor.**
- **Time spent by the student learning through approved distance education curriculum are considered proxy hours and entered into LACES as Instruction-Distance Learning hours not, Instruction hours.**

What is Distance Education?

As defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), Distance Education is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority for the instructional period.

Purpose

Nebraska Adult Education has long strived to provide learning opportunities to a larger population of students across the State. Due to the large geographic area and the often challenging economic status of adult learners, distance education provides more students with the opportunity to enroll in basic skills improvement, high school equivalency test preparation and English language acquisition programs without the barrier of traveling to and from class on a regular basis.

The foundations of this policy are designed to improve the program's services to adult learners, regardless of their location at the time of instruction. The use of technology-based curriculum to serve adult learners assures that local program providers are making the best effort towards reaching more students and improving the lives of adults in the State of Nebraska. The primary objective of local providers is to serve students involved in distance education through the State's approved distance education curriculum.

Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media, primarily computer software, web-based applications and other online technology-based curriculum. The flexibility of schedules and the ability to study via technology in combination with designated classroom and blended learning maximizes learning potential.

DEFINITIONS

Distance Learning

A formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority for the instructional period. Students enrolled in distance learning will learn by accessing approved distance education curriculum and/or by completing teacher assigned lessons. Accrued instructional hours are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION-DISTANCE LEARNING**.

Traditional Learning

A learning activity in which adult learners receive their instruction in-person, in a traditional classroom setting. Accrued instructional hours are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION** hours. Hours accrued by a student in the classroom while using approved distance education curriculum like Burlington English will be entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION** hours.

Blended Learning

A learning activity where adult learners receive education or learning through both a traditional classroom setting and/or remote learning from an instructor and through approved distance learning curriculum off-site on the student's own time. Instructional hours accrued in the classroom or through remote learning are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION** hours. Instructional hours accrued via approved distance education curriculum off-site by the student are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION-DISTANCE LEARNING** hours.

Remote-Learning

A method of delivering real-time, synchronous and interactive in-class learning through the use of technology, in which students receive instruction from an instructor who is at an off-site location at the same time the student is present in an instructional classroom site, at their own home or wherever the student has access to internet. The most common type of remote learning will be delivered through web-based videoconferencing applications, such as Zoom or Skype. All accrued hours are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION** hours.

Instruction Hours

Hours spent by the adult learner where direct interaction between the student and the instructor take place synchronously in which the instructor is able to verify the identity of the student. This includes classroom instruction, web-based videoconferencing, telephone, and e-learning platforms.

Proxy Hours

Instructional hours in which the adult learner is located outside the classroom and spends independent time engaged in the learning activity through approved distance education curriculum and/or teacher assigned lessons. Proxy hour models do not apply to remote learning options in any way. Accrued proxy hours are entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION-DISTANCE LEARNING** hours.

Tracking Hours

Recording instructional hours in LACES will be based on the type of learning, not just the location of the student. Whenever a student is on-site in a classroom setting or engaged in remote learning, hours will be entered into LACES as **INSTRUCTION** hours. Whenever a student is off-site and using an approved distance education curriculum, or not synchronously interacting with an instructor, proxy hours will be entered in LACES as **INSTRUCTION-DISTANCE LEARNING** hours.

For the purposes of NRS reporting, the student will be reported on NRS Table 5 or 5a based on the percentage and type of hours entered. LACES will make this determination accordingly and report automatically. Data entry staff do not need to calculate hours. It is imperative that program staff enter student hours correctly.

Programs are required to record daily student attendance for both traditional learning and remote learning students through the use of physical student sign-in sheets provided to the student. Each student will validate the sign-in sheets with their signature.

DISTANCE LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

Authorized Program

For Program Year 2021, all subrecipients of AEFLA funding are permitted to deliver distance learning to students via approved distance education curriculum to meet the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Program Enrollment and Assessment

All adult learners enrolled in distance learning must first complete a student enrollment form and attend enrollment and assessment activities in a manner where the identity of the student can be established and intake paperwork can be completed. Any individual served must be entered into LACES. Distance Learners will also receive a Career Pathways interview and complete the additional career pathways assessment requirements.

Additionally, adult learners must receive a pre-assessment before instruction hours and proxy hours will begin accruing in LACES. Pre and post-assessments must be conducted through face-to-face interaction or via remote testing with a trained test administrator in a secure setting.

Measuring Instructional Hours

Students engaged in distance learning must have at least 12 hours of instruction before they can be counted for Federal reporting. Programs are allowed to use a combination of contact and proxy hours to achieve federal reporting status of the adult learner. Any individual served must be entered into LACES.

Verifiable Contact Hours

Under Nebraska Distance Education policies, students engaged primarily in distance learning, must receive two, one-on-one interactions between the student and instructor per calendar month. These interactions are required to verify the identity of the learner and ensure measurements of progress are monitored to continuously improve the student's individualized learning plan. Nebraska Adult Education requires all programs to implement best practices to improve student success through interactions that include personal experiences either remotely or in class. Providers must make every effort to continue and improve the student's individualized learning plan throughout the enrollment in adult education.

Contact hours for distance learners can be a combination of distance learning, traditional learning and remote learning. Hours should be entered into LACES according to the type of instruction.

Programs with adult education coordination program sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education can utilize instructional volunteers or the volunteer coordinator to meet the one on one personal interaction requirement. Student sign-in sheets are required for all instructional hours.

Proxy Models

Clock Time

This model assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time the student is connected to or engaged in, an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.

Programs are required to print a clock hours report and enter time into LACES for NRS reporting.

Teacher Verification

A model which assigns a fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment based on teacher determination of the extent to which a participant engaged in, or completed, the assignment.

Learner Mastery

This model assigns a fixed number of hours of credit based on the student passing a test on the content of each lesson. Participants work with the curriculum and materials, and when they feel they have mastered the material, take a test. A high percentage of correct answers earns the credit hours attached to the material.

Approved Curricula

See Appendix D for a list of State-approved distance education curricula.

Programs wishing to recommend additional distance education curriculum for approval may submit a Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application to the State Director. Applications will be reviewed by the State Office staff as time allows. Applications will be approved or rejected. Upon approval, additional curriculum will be added and local program providers will be notified of the update.

DISTANCE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

The pre and post-testing requirements for distance education are the same as for traditional students enrolled in Nebraska Adult Education, therefore the assessment policies contained in this document must be applied to all students engaged in distance education. Students must first attend Program Enrollment and Assessment activities prior to beginning distance learning.

CASAS® Assessments

CASAS® pre- and post-testing policies outlined in Nebraska Adult Education's Assessment policy apply to all distance education programs.



Appendices

APPENDIX A: CASAS® Information Links

APPENDIX B: Nebraska Adult Education Content Standards Links

APPENDIX C: Minimum - Maximum Time to Post-Test

APPENDIX D: Approved Distance Education Curricula

APPENDIX E: Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application

APPENDIX F: State Office Contact Information

APPENDIX A: CASAS® Information Links

CASAS® Website:

<https://www.casas.org/>

CASAS® Training:

<http://training.casas.org/>

CASAS® eTest Online Help:

<https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/software/casas-etests/etests-online-help>

CASAS® Test Security Policy:

<https://www.casas.org/docs/default-source/pagecontents/test-security-policy-form.pdf?sfvrsn=18?Status=Master>

CASAS® Remote Testing:

<https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/remote-testing>

APPENDIX B: Nebraska Adult Education Content Standards Links

College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education

<https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf>

English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education

<https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/elp-standards-adult-ed.pdf>

Nebraska Content Standards

<https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/>

National Reporting System Technical Assistance Guide

<https://www.nrsweb.org/sites/default/files/NRS-TA-January-2018-508.pdf>

APPENDIX C: Minimum - Maximum Time to Post-Test

TEST NAME	MINIMUM – MAXIMUM TIME TO TEST	
CASAS® Assessments	ESL LEVELS 1 - 6	40 - 80 Hours of Instruction
	ABE LEVELS 1 - 4	40 - 70 Hours of Instruction
	ABE LEVEL 5	40 - 60 Hours of Instruction
	ABE LEVEL 6	12 Hours of Instruction*

*ABE LEVEL 6 - No Post-Test Required
12 Hours of Instruction for Federal Reporting

APPENDIX D: Approved Distance Education Curricula

Distance Education Curriculum	Delivery Mode	Target Students	Proxy Hour Model	Proxy Credit Recorded
i-Pathways www.i-pathways.org	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
Burlington English® www.burlingtonenglish.com	Online	ESL	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
Aztec www.aztecsoftware.com	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
Essential Education CASAS GOALS Academy www.essentialed.com Essential Education GED Academy™ www.passged.com	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
MyLab™ / Mastering™ www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
Ed Ready www.edready.org	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.
USA Learns® www.usalearns.org	Online	ESL	Learner Mastery	Print and archive a monthly report of assessments completed for verification.
ProLiteracy Learning Upgrade www.newreaderspress.com/learning-upgrade ProLiteracy Online Learning www.newreaderspress.com/pre-hse-course www.newreaderspress.com/ged-test-prep-course	Online	ABE GED®	Clock	Recorded time tracked and validated in the application. Reports must be printed and archived for verification.

APPENDIX E: Distance Education Curriculum Approval Application

AEFLA Program Information	
Program Name:	
Program Director:	
Email:	
Date of Application:	
Distance Education Curriculum Information	
Product Name:	
Delivery Mode:	
Proxy Hour Model:	
Criteria for Reporting Hours:	
Target Population:	
Publisher Information:	
Full Product Description:	

Submit to: Adult Education Director, Nebraska Department of Education, PO Box 94987, Lincoln, NE, 68509

APPENDIX F: State Office Contact Information

Adult Education Office

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Nebraska Adult Education Website

<https://www.education.ne.gov/aded/>

Nebraska Adult Education
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Mission Statement

To provide direct and equitable access to Adult Education programs that are focused on high quality English language acquisition, adult basic skills improvement and high school equivalency credentialing that promote opportunities to transition to postsecondary education, job training opportunities and life-long careers.