ASSESSMENT POLICIES

FOR USING

The BEST Plus

January 2015
Jane Schwerdtfeger, ACLS
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Overview of Learning Gains Assessments................................................................. 3  
Overview of the BEST Plus ........................................................................................................ 4  
Before Administering the BEST Plus .......................................................................................... 4  
  Required Staff Training .............................................................................................................. 4  
  Initial Test Administrator Certification Process ...................................................................... 4  
  Annual Recertification ............................................................................................................ 6  
  Required Test Materials .......................................................................................................... 7  
  When to use the BEST Plus, when to use the TABE CLAS-E Writing Assessment ............... 8  
  Student Placement and When to Administer ....................................................................... 8  
  Student Primary Assessment Area May Change in Fiscal Year ............................................. 8  
  Programs Enrolling Students after April 1 may Receive Credit for Post Tests and Learning Gains, under Certain Conditions .......................................................... 8  
  Test Accommodations ........................................................................................................... 9  
  Pre- and Post-Testing Interval Varies by Intensity of Class Hours ......................................... 9  
  Co-enrolled Learners ............................................................................................................. 9  
  Cognos Report of all Co-enrolled Students at a Site ............................................................... 10  
  To Receive a Cognos Account ............................................................................................... 10  
  Test Security ......................................................................................................................... 11  
During BEST Plus Administration ............................................................................................... 11  
  Who May Administer ............................................................................................................ 11  
  Following Test Administration Procedures .......................................................................... 11  
  Using Assessment Reports for Tracking When to Post-Test ................................................ 11  
  Test Conditions .................................................................................................................. 12  
  Recalibrate Every Time Before You Test ............................................................................ 12  
After Administering the BEST Plus Test .................................................................................. 13  
  BEST Plus Scoring Monitor .................................................................................................. 13  
  Score Reporting and Exit Criteria for NRS Advanced ESL Students .................................... 13  
  ESOL Speaking and Listening Correlations using the BEST Plus Test .................................. 13  
  Measuring Learner Gains ...................................................................................................... 13  
  Copying Over BEST Plus Scores to the Next Fiscal Year .................................................... 14  
Questions................................................................................................................................ 14  
Appenidx A: Massachusetts' Procedures for Using the BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit... 15  
  1. The Scoring Refresher ....................................................................................................... 15  
  2. The Scoring Activity for Recertification ........................................................................... 16
General Overview of Learning Gains Assessments

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is mandated by the US Department of Education to use valid and reliable assessments to report students’ completion of educational functioning levels. ACLS requires programs use four ABE standardized assessments, depending on the classes they offer: the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT), the TABE Forms 9/10, Best Plus, and the TABE Clas-E.

Massachusetts’s process for using required assessments for measuring learning gains:
1. Learning gains are based on the first test and the last test given in a fiscal year
2. Class Placement (after intake, using any instrument(s) other than MAPT)
3. Pre-test (within 2-4 weeks of class placement)
4. Formative assessment using teacher-made or other assessments during class to determine if students mastered what was taught (ongoing)
5. Optional Mid-year Test (after 65 hours of instruction; ABE Programs for Incarcerated Adults may test students after 40 hours of instruction; test up to three times/year)
6. Post-test (after 65 hours of instruction, and on or before June 30. Programs may test up to three times/year)
7. All assessments administered must be entered into SMARTT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Assessments</th>
<th>Skills tested</th>
<th>Which Programs Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAPT</td>
<td>ABE Reading and Math</td>
<td>ABE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABE 9/10, Levels E, M, D, A</td>
<td>ABE Writing (Language subtest)</td>
<td>ABE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABE Reading and Math</td>
<td>ABE Programs in Correctional Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAVE 9/10, Level L</td>
<td>Literacy Level Reading</td>
<td>ABE learners below GLE 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEST Plus</td>
<td>ESOL Speaking and Listening</td>
<td>ESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAVE Clas-E Writing Assessment only</td>
<td>ESOL Writing</td>
<td>ESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAVE Clas-E Reading Assessment only</td>
<td>ESOL Reading</td>
<td>ESOL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For assessments to be accurate, they must be administered and scored according to test developers’ instructions. If staff make what may seem like small changes to test administration or scoring (such as giving test directions differently or diverging from a test’s rubric when scoring), test scores lose their accuracy. These changes affect the instruction learners may need and slows them down in achieving their goals. It also adversely affects the accuracy of statewide scores that ACLS uses to base annual state projections of learning gains for US DOE.

Formative assessments are crucial to instruction and learner gains. They include authentic, teacher-made, task-based activities and products, etc. They test various skills determined by the teacher’s learning objectives and should include content and skills from the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Framework for ESOL and the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE). Formative assessments are important because they indicate what students learned (and did not learn) and they guide what to teach next. They also involve students in the learning process, which improves motivation, persistence, and retention.
Overview of the BEST Plus

The state’s assessment policy requires programs to use the BEST Plus test (computer-adaptive version) for the following learners enrolled in ESOL classes:

- ESOL students who enter at SPL 0-6 and exit at SPL 7, and whose goal is to improve their oral proficiency in English.

The following programs may choose to use either the TABE Clas-E Reading or Writing Assessment or BEST Plus, depending on their learners’ goals:

- Workplace Education (ESOL) Programs
- Distance Learning (ESOL) Programs
- Students enrolled in Pre-Literacy ESOL classes, Levels 1, 2, and 3

The BEST Plus, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), is an individually administered, scripted oral interview designed to assess English language learners’ interpersonal communication using everyday language. BEST Plus is a performance-based test that measures an ESOL learner’s oral skills in three areas: Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication.

In the computer-adaptive version of the BEST Plus, test items are delivered via a computer with a BEST Plus CD. The test administrator asks the examinee a question that is presented to the administrator on the computer screen, listens to the examinee’s response, uses a rubric to determine the score for the item, and then enters the score into the computer. (The examinee does not operate the computer). Based on that score, the computer determines the difficulty level of the next question. As a result, the questions are appropriate for the learner’s ability and this allows for the fewest number of test questions to accurately determine the student’s overall test score and proficiency level. Test time averages 10-15 minutes, depending on the proficiency level of the examinee. For more information, please see the BEST Plus website at http://www.cal.org/aea/bestplus/ca.html.

Before Administering the BEST Plus

Required Staff Training
A minimum of two staff per program must attend and a six-hour BEST Plus initial training offered by SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) and successfully pass the related requirements before any testing of students can begin. Programs offering ESOL classes must maintain at least two trained BEST Plus test administrators at all times.

- Trained staff may not train fellow staff members at their programs.

Initial Test Administrator Certification Process
In order to receive Competency status and be able to administer the BEST Plus, the practitioner must first attend a six-hour BEST Plus training. Directly following the training, she/he must be approved to continue the certification process by the BEST Plus initial trainer and Joan Ford, SABES director of assessment. Participants will be contacted within one week regarding their status. They must then complete the following steps in order to become fully certified.
1. To ensure alignment with the BEST Plus scoring rubric, the trainee must complete a Scoring Activity (to be determined each year) using a copy of the score sheet in the BEST Plus Refresher Workbook, Test Administrator’s Edition, and the red CD entitled “BEST Plus Scoring Activities” from the Scoring Refresher Toolkit. The practitioner must do the Scoring Activity with no help or discussion from others.

2. To become comfortable with actual assessment administration, the trainee must perform 10 practice test administrations using the black CD entitled “BEST Plus Administrator Practice CD” from the Test Administration Guide. At least 5 of the practice administrations must be done with non-native English speaking students; the remaining number may be done with colleagues, family, or friends. None of the practice test administrations may be used for a student’s actual pre- or post-test. Also, the practice administrations may not be given to students before an actual testing session. Trainees must fill out the Proficiency Development Form with the names of the 10 people tested, date it, and have it signed by his/her program director or ESOL assessment coordinator.

The Scoring Activity and the Proficiency Development Form, with program director's signature, should be sent to Joan Ford by mail, email, or fax within three weeks of receiving initial approval. Joan Ford may be best reached at her email address: joan.ford@bristolcc.edu. Her address is Bristol Community College, 777 Elsbree Street, Building Q, Fall River, MA 02720.

If a test administrator did not turn in a scoring activity by the deadline, he/she will not meet the requirements for certification and may not administer the BEST PLUS Assessment.

If the practitioner passes the initial Scoring Activity and performs the 10 practice test administrations, she/he will receive Competency status and be certified to administer BEST Plus assessments (no certificate will be given). Practitioners may now purchase BEST Plus test administrations. If the practitioner does not pass the Scoring Activity, Joan Ford will make contact regarding remediation within two weeks.

A “passing score” for the Scoring Activity is determined by the accuracy with which the practitioner uses each of the three sections of the BEST Plus scoring rubric, which assesses for students’ basic listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. The possible combinations of scores for the three sections are:

- **R-R-R:** no remediation required
- **R-R-A** in any combination: no remediation required
- **R-A-A** in any combination: no remediation required
- **A-A-A:** remediation required
- **U** in any area: remediation required

*(R = recertification recommended; A = acceptable but may need remediation; U = unacceptable)*
Remediation will be provided by Joan Ford. If the practitioner remains unsuccessful, Joan will inform the practitioner and her/his Program Director that the practitioner must retake the initial training. The status email notification will indicate the valid through-date for administering BEST Plus assessments. Please note: no certificates will be given; programs must retain their email notification.

**Annual Recertification**
To ensure scoring accuracy, BEST Plus test administrators must recertify annually by taking part in a Scoring Refresher and successfully completing a 30-minute scoring activity. Each year, practitioners that are currently certified to administer the BEST Plus assessment will be notified in late January by ACLS that the recertification process will begin soon, and which Scoring Activity to complete; program directors must give the information to all relevant staff as soon as it is received.

**New:** In FY14, a new policy was instituted in which BEST Plus test administrators who have scored consistently in the "recommended" area for Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity and Communication in the annual recertification for the past 3 years may recertify every 3rd year instead of every year. Practitioners who benefit from this change must also continue to test at least 20 students each year to maintain their fidelity to the BEST Plus scoring rubric. Joan Ford will send a list of those staff that do not need to recertify until FY17.

For staff who do need to recertify, test administrators will need:
- The BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit
- The BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Workbook, Test Administrator's Edition (one for each Test Administrator)

Every ESE-funded program has been given a set of these materials. If you do not have these materials at your program, please purchase one from the test publisher at [http://www.cal.org/aea/bestplus/products.html](http://www.cal.org/aea/bestplus/products.html). Test administrators should use the Toolkit to review and recalibrate their scoring within a structured forum so that they can share their insights and questions about administering and scoring BEST Plus tests. For example, test administrators may view the Toolkit DVD/video either as a group with a facilitator (preferred method). However, if this preferred method is not feasible, practitioners may proceed individually.

BEST Plus test administrators will have one month to score a sample set of assessments and submit them to their Program Director or ESOL Assessment Coordinator so that she/he may send them to Joan Ford, SABES director of assessment professional development. The deadline for getting the completed scoring activities to Joan is **Friday, February 27**.

- There are no exceptions for late submissions. **Test Administrators who do not return their Scoring Activity by this date will not be able to administer the BEST Plus until they re-take the initial BEST Plus training, refresher, and scoring activity.**
- (Practitioners receiving their Initial Certification in FY15 will not have to recertify until FY16.) Recertification status will be valid for one year.
Ms. Ford will inform program directors/ESOL Assessment Coordinators of their staff’s recertification status by the end of March, 2015. Recertifications submitted earlier than Feb. 27 will be processed in the order in which they are received, and thus programs will be notified sooner than the end of March.

Staff who receive a borderline “Acceptable” or an “Unacceptable” score in any one of the three rubric areas will be contacted by Ms. Ford to receive remediation in order to continue to administer the BEST Plus.

Please note: no certificates will be given; please retain your notification email from Ms. Ford about successfully passing the BEST Plus.

New for FY15: Change in Procedure for Submitting BEST Plus Recertifications

This year, there will be a revised method for submitting BEST Plus Recertifications. We ask that Program Directors (or ESOL Assessment Coordinators) send all the BEST Plus recertification scoring activities together with a list of practitioner’s names rather than each practitioner sending theirs separately. Please be sure the practitioner’s name is on every scoring activity sheet. To aid directors in this process, a BEST Plus Recertification Form has been developed for your use. Directors/ESOL Assessment Coordinators, please use this form when submitting BEST Plus recertifications.

There have been problems in the past with some scoring activities getting lost, and because all statewide assessment activities are now centralized with one person, we hope to avoid any problems with recertifications becoming lost or unaccounted for. All information regarding successful recertification or any need for remediation will also go to the director, who we ask to then pass on the information to his/her staff. We believe this revised system will result in clear communication between programs and the professional development assessment office, and we appreciate your help in this matter.

Please send all BEST Plus recertification scoring activities either via email, mail or fax to:
Joan Ford, SABES director of assessment professional development
Address: Bristol Community College, 777 Elsbree Street, Building Q, Fall River, MA 02720
Phone: (774) 357-2190
Email: joan.ford@bristolcc.edu
Fax: (508) 730-3280

For more information and specific instructions on how to use the BEST Plus Toolkit, please refer to Appendix A.

Required Test Materials

At the BEST Plus initial training, participants receive the Test Administrator’s Guide (TAG) and CD-ROM needed to access test administrations. The TAG and accompanying CD are provided free of charge by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. There is a charge for each BEST Plus test administration.

**When to use the BEST Plus, when to use the TABE CLAS-E Writing Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student SPL Level</th>
<th>Assessment to Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If an ESOL student is placed at SPL 0 or above:</td>
<td>Use the BEST Plus or the TABE Clas-E Reading or Writing Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If an ESOL student’s goal is to improve his/her speaking and listening skills:</td>
<td>Use the BEST Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If an ESOL student’s goal is to improve his/her writing skills:</td>
<td>Use the TABE Clas-E Writing Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If an ESOL student’s goal is to improve his/her reading skills:</td>
<td>Use the TABE Clas-E Reading Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Placement and When to Administer**

Programs may use any placement tests they choose. The BEST Plus may be given at intake, and may be given as both placement and pre-test. It must be administered within the first two to four weeks of instruction.

**Student Primary Assessment Area May Change in Fiscal Year**

Either BEST Plus, CLAS-E Reading or CLAS-E Writing must be selected as the primary assessment to report educational gain for students in ESOL classes. Programs are required to administer only one of the three, but more than one assessment may be administered, with one counting as the student’s primary assessment area and entered into SMARTT.

- A student’s Primary Assessment Area may change during the fiscal year and assistance from SABES SMARTT Tech Support is no longer needed.
- Learners who are co-enrolled may have different primary assessment areas at the different programs where they are enrolled to maximize their time at each program. (See the section on co-enrolled learners for more information).

**Programs Enrolling Students after April 1 may Receive Credit for Post Tests and Learning Gains, under Certain Conditions**

Students who are enrolled in a program April 1 or after and who have 65 hours of attended instruction between April 1 and June 30 may take a pre- and post-test. The learner’s post-test will be added to the program’s percentage of pre-/post-tested learners.
Any type of attended hours qualify, including rate-based class hours, non rate-base class hours, match hours, and distance learning hours. In addition, if students have attended 65 hours of instruction between April 1 and June 30 and make learning gains, these gains will be added to the program’s percentage of learner gains.

**Test Accommodations**

An adult learner with a disability must provide the ABE/ESOL program with a disability-related documentation if he/she requires accommodation(s). If a counselor or other program staff person determines through a screening that there is a strong possibility that the learner has a learning or other disability, a formal assessment may be undertaken. A formal assessment of a learning disability must be administered by a licensed professional (e.g., psychologist, school psychologist, or psychiatrist) and is valid for 5 years from the date of the formal assessment. In some cases, a “licensed professional” may be a speech, vocational, physical, or occupational therapist with verification by a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist. An IEP (Individual Education Plan) is not a documented formal diagnosis of a learning disability.

“Disability-related documentation” includes educational assessments, or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed by the public school system to document a person’s disability for an accommodation in the ABE program. For more information about modifications and accommodations relating to ABE instruction, please refer to pages 13-15 in the ACLS Disability Guidelines, at [http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/disability/default.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/disability/default.html).

For any questions, concerns, or if staff have a student who should receive test accommodations on the BEST Plus, please contact Dana Varzan-Parker, ACLS Assessment Specialist, at dvarzan-parker@doe.mass.edu or April Zenisky-Laguilles at aclstesthelp@educ.umass.edu.

**Pre- and Post-Testing Interval Varies by Intensity of Class Hours**

Programs need to pre- and post-test enrolled students each fiscal year in the student’s primary area of assessment to capture student educational gain. Programs should generally post-test after an interval of 65 hours of instruction. Programs may give the BEST Plus test to their learners up to three times in a fiscal year. The test administered for the pre-test must remain the same for the post-test (e.g., one may not pre-test with the BEST Plus and post-test with the TABE Clas-E Reading or CLAS-E Writing).

**Co-enrolled Learners**

Assessment information for learners co-enrolled or transferred will appear in SMARTT so that all programs involved with those students can use it.

A student’s required assessment (e.g., BEST Plus, CLAS-E Reading or Writing) will appear in SMARTT at all sites where the student is enrolled, regardless of the site where a student took the test.

- Assessments are color-coded in the SMARTT Student Assessment Screen to indicate where the student took the test.
The Primary Assessment Area may be set at all sites within the current fiscal year, and may vary between sites. (For example, a student may have a primary assessment area of math at one site, and reading at a site at which he/she is co-enrolled).

The copy icon will appear next to all May/June tests so that users may copy the last test taken from any site to their own site in the new Fiscal Year.

A link labeled “Other Site Assessments” located on the SMARTT “Welcome Screen” shows the list of co-enrolled students who took tests at other sites. There are two panels for current and exited students. Programs may view the list and drill down to the assessment screen to view tests for individual students. Programs may decide if they wish to set the student’s primary assessment area for this test. A column also shows if the primary area has been set. This feature will help programs determine whether or not dually enrolled students need to have another assessment administered immediately.

To access the SMARTT Assessment Reports, click on the "Site" link on the left menu in SMARTT, and then click on the "Assessment Report Primary Set" option. The report will list all the tests, dates, forms, and total number of attended hours. When the total number of attended hours is 65 or more, a program may test the student.

Cognos Report of all Co-enrolled Students at a Site
In addition to the SMARTT Student Assessment Screen, there is also a report in Cognos that allows a program to view all co-enrolled students in a site, sorted by their assessment. This report lists the co-enrolled student’s name, the other site(s) in which the student is co-enrolled, the site at which the test was taken, the date taken, the test name, test form and level, and the test score. This report can be helpful in that the SMARTT Student Assessment Screen lists students individually, while this Cognos report lists all co-enrolled students in a program, filtered by their assessment. To use this report, log on to Cognos http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/smartt/ using the program’s or an individual Cognos account. Once on the ACLS Homepage, select the tab at the top labeled “Desk Review” and the report on co-enrolled students will be among the reports listed.

To Receive a Cognos Account
Program staff may use their Program’s Cognos account since every site has one. Staff wishing to have a Cognos account may have their program director request one for him/her, as individual access is at the discretion of the Program Director. Requests for accounts need to be made two weeks prior to when the account is needed. Program directors, please send requests to Sriram Rajan srajan@doe.mass.edu with the following information supplied:
  ▪ Name of staff who will receive the account
  ▪ Email
  ▪ Official Site Name (no acronyms or abbreviations)
  ▪ Role at Program (specify Teacher, Counselor, Site Coordinator, or other)
  ▪ The staff request for what they would like the Cognos User ID to be (e.g., 1st initial and last name, or some other personally meaningful identifier)
Users will receive their Cognos account information by email, along with a generic password. When users first log in, they must create their own password. Users need to write down the user ID and password and keep them in a handy place. Users and Programs must manage their own passwords and User IDs; ACLS will not have that information.

**Test Security**

All BEST Plus CDs and BEST Plus student test scores must be kept in a secure place. Although students’ test scores are stored on the hard drive of the computer used to administer the test, it is important to back up the hard drive, and/or keep printed copies of the scores in a secure place. After the BEST Plus assessment is completed, a score report is generated that can be printed out or saved to the hard drive or disk. Staff should share, explain, and discuss score reports with students so students can understand their progress.

Staff and test administrators may not use the BEST Plus test items to prepare learners for their BEST Plus tests. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reserves the right to immediately terminate the program’s grant if any staff are found to be violating the BEST Plus assessment policy regarding test security.

**During BEST Plus Administration**

**Who May Administer**

Teachers who are certified to administer BEST Plus may not administer the BEST Plus to their own students. Any other certified test administrator may administer the BEST Plus.

**Following Test Administration Procedures**

Test administrators must follow the test directions in the BEST Plus Test Administrator’s Guide (TAG). The test publisher states in the TAG, “Test administrators have ultimate responsibility for the test’s reliability. Test administrators must agree to:

- Carefully read all materials presented in the Test Administrator’s Guide
- Use the test only for appropriate purposes and with examinees for whom it is intended (e.g., it is not intended for hearing or speech-impaired, or visually impaired learners)
- Follow exactly all administration and scoring procedures
- Follow sound professional practice in discussing and releasing scores
- Not duplicate or alter in any manner any BEST Plus materials or test items without receiving prior written permission from the Center for Applied Linguistics.”

**Using Assessment Reports for Tracking When to Post-Test**

The SMARTT system generates assessment reports so that a program can track when to administer the next BEST Plus test. The BEST Plus report will list the date administered for the previous fiscal year, either the copied May/June test or a new pre-test, and optional mid-year test for the current fiscal year.
The assessment reports may also be used to check which learners have not yet been post-tested near the end of the fiscal year. Any of the reports may be exported into Excel.

- To access these reports, go into SMARTT, select the “Site” link on the left menu in SMARTT and then select “Assessment Report Primary Set.”
- To see BEST Plus assessments taken by all learners at the program regardless of their Primary Assessment Area, instead select “BEST Plus Report” (shown in green) below the “Assessment Report Primary Set.”
- Any tests completed after June 30th will be counted as pre-tests with a date of July 1 in the next fiscal year.

**Test Conditions**

The testing location must be quiet and comfortable so learners will not be distracted by their surroundings while taking the test. Learners may be tested in a quiet computer lab, empty classroom, office, or other space. Learners may not be tested in an occupied classroom or space where other students are in class working or talking.

**Recalibrate Every Time Before You Test**

To ensure consistent BEST Plus test scores statewide, all test administrators must achieve inter-rater reliability, so that all practitioners throughout the state are uniform in their scoring. All scorers need practice and require refresher work before any testing session to maintain their uniformity of scoring. The goal is for all scorers to calibrate themselves to the rubric and training materials, **not** to each other.

BEST Plus test administrators must recalibrate each time they test to ensure consistent scoring accuracy among BEST Plus test administrators. Test administrators must review the BEST Plus score rubric and then read and score the Benchmarks and Scoring Practice activities in Section V of the BEST Plus Test Administrator Guide (TAG). Test administrators should compare their scores with the official answers in the TAG. If scores are inconsistent with the scoring activity two or more times, contact Joan Ford, Dana Varzan-Parker, or April Zenisky to discuss (see page 14 for contact information). Test administrators who have been administering the BEST Plus for one or more years will find the Scoring Refresher Video in the Scoring Refresher Toolkit helpful in clarifying scoring beyond what is covered in the initial training.

**Test administrators must use the scoring rubric each time they test.**

It is very important for test administrators to be aware of their limits for scoring before exhaustion begins to affect the reliability of scores. Generally after administering four tests in a row, it is time for a short break. Include time for calibration and re-familiarizing yourself with the BEST Plus rubric.
After Administering the BEST Plus Test

BEST Plus Scoring Monitor
Programs must designate one person as the BEST Plus Scoring Monitor. The monitor compiles all the scores and maintains them in one place. She/he ensures that rubric and scoring procedures are followed, and notes if any of the readers’ scores appear to be inconsistent with the rubric or potentially inflated compared to other data regarding a student’s oral proficiency. If scoring inconsistencies occur, the BEST Plus Scoring Monitor follows up with Joan Ford to ensure scorers are scoring according to the BEST Plus rubric and receive technical assistance.

Score Reporting and Exit Criteria for NRS Advanced ESL Students
BEST Plus scale scores must be recorded in SMARTT. Scale scores are the type of score used for the BEST Plus, and they are used to compute and derive all other scores associated with the BEST Plus. The SMARTT ABE database will translate the scale scores into the levels stipulated by the federal National Reporting System (NRS). Programs may generate reports that portray student educational functioning levels and gains using SMARTT.

The exit criteria for BEST Plus is a scale score of 541 and above, which corresponds to SPL 7. Students who test at a scale score of 541 and above during the fiscal year may remain in the program until the end of the fiscal year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Scores</th>
<th>Student Performance Levels (SPLs)</th>
<th>NRS level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400 and below</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>Beginning ESL Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 – 417</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low Beginning ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>418 – 438</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High Beginning ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>439 – 472</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low Intermediate ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473 – 506</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High Intermediate ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>507 - 540</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Advanced ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>541 and above</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exit Criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESOL Speaking and Listening Correlations using the BEST Plus Test

Measuring Learner Gains
Learning gains are calculated each fiscal year from pre- and post-testing and based on learners’ first (pre-test) and last test.

Massachusetts measures learners’ educational gain in two different ways. First, Massachusetts reports the number of ESOL learners completing or advancing one or more Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) as defined by the US Department of Education’s National Reporting System (NRS). Massachusetts is required by the US Department of Education to not only report learning gains based on EFL completion rates, but also to use EFL completion rates as a measure of program performance.
In addition to measuring learning gains by EFL completion rates, Massachusetts measures “meaningful educational gain.” Meaningful educational gain is measured solely by the improvement in test scores between the pre- and post-test and does not take into consideration Educational Functioning Levels. Meaningful educational gain is measured by an increase of 33 or more scale score points on the BEST Plus.

Measuring completion of Educational Functioning Levels for the federal US Department of Education (National Reporting System, Federal Report Table 4)

- The National Reporting System (NRS) requires that all students who have 12 hours or more of attendance be included in all Federal Report tables, including the tables that report pre and post-tested learners and make gains by completing an Educational Functioning Level.

Copying Over BEST Plus Scores to the Next Fiscal Year

Any BEST Plus tests given to students in May or June may be copied to count as the first (pre-) test in the new fiscal year. Program staff also have the option give a new pre-test. The copy icon will appear next to all May/June tests so that users may copy the scores from any site to their own site in the new Fiscal Year if they wish.

- The May/June test will then be dated July 1 of the new fiscal year. The July 1 date is color-coded to let program staff know it was copied.
- Transitions programs, see specific policies at http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/TCCPpolicy.html.

Questions

Program staff must read the Assessment Updates in the ACLS Monthly Mailings for important new information: http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/mailings.

Please contact April Zenisky-Laguilles at aclstesthelp@educ.umass.edu, or Joan Ford, SABES director of assessment professional development, at Bristol Community College, 777 Elsbree Street, Building Q, Fall River, MA 02720; Phone: (774) 357-2190; Email: joan.ford@bristolcc.edu; Fax: (508) 730-3280.

For policy-related questions, please contact Dana Varzan-Parker, Program and Assessment Specialist, at Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148; Phone: 781-338-3811; Email: dvarzan-parker@doe.mass.edu; Fax: (781) 338-3394.
Appendix A: Massachusetts' Procedures for Using the BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit

Overview
To ensure scoring accuracy statewide, all BEST Plus test administrators need to be recertified by 1) taking part in a Scoring Refresher and 2) successfully completing a 30-minute Scoring Activity. To recertify, you will need:

- A BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit
- A BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Workbook, Test Administrator's Edition: one Workbook for each BEST Plus test administrator

Test Administrators must use the Toolkit to review and recalibrate their scoring within a structured forum to share their insights and questions about administering and scoring the BEST Plus. It is also an important way to review and recalibrate their scoring in order to ensure reliable assessment data statewide.

1. The Scoring Refresher
The Toolkit and Workbook may be used by an individual test administrator or by a large or small group led by a facilitator. Participating in a group is preferred, since test administrators benefit from each other's questions and experience. If a group Scoring Refresher is done, a facilitator is required. If the Refresher is done individually, he/she needs to read the Toolkit and accompanying facilitator's edition of the Workbook prior to the Refresher. The Toolkit contains helpful information and a Workbook with extra information for the facilitator.

The Refresher Facilitator's Role
Facilitators need to be experienced with using BEST Plus and in working with the adult ESL learners, and be:

- Comfortable and confident with the scoring rubric and all three language components tested (Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication)
- Able to use the scoring rubric to justify scores used as benchmarks on the video
- Experienced with facilitating discussions and be able to summarize information presented in the Scoring Refresher Video
- Empathetic and able to judge when participants need a break or a question answered
- Available to review all Scoring Refresher materials carefully before facilitating a Refresher session

Facilitators may be a staff person who is in charge of assessment at your site; an on-staff certified BEST Plus trainer or a certified BEST Plus trainer hired by the program to facilitate.

- Facilitators must read the Toolkit and facilitator's edition of the Workbook prior to leading the Scoring Refresher.
- Facilitators must make clear to test administrators that although their personal ideas and concepts of language proficiency and assessment can differ from those represented in BEST Plus, these differences must be set aside for the purposes of BEST Plus scoring accuracy.
The Toolkit or DVD/Videos should not be taken home by staff and is the property of the program. The Toolkit materials must be kept in a secure place when not in use. Programs that lose their Refresher Toolkit must purchase another for $160 at http://www.cal.org/aea/bestplus/toolkit.html.

How and When to use the Toolkit:
- Facilitators must follow the procedures outlined in the Toolkit for conducting the Scoring Refresher. Individuals using the Refresher by themselves must follow the Agenda for self-study in Section V-9 in the Toolkit.
- The Refresher will take 2.5 to 3 hours to complete. The Refresher can be separated into two sessions, but not broken into more sessions than that.
- Facilitators must use the Needs Assessment, Self Assessment, Refresher Planning Worksheet and Checklist materials in Section V, pages 3-8. All test administrators must complete the Self Assessment in Section V, page 3-4 in the Toolkit prior to the refresher. (The facilitator needs to copy and give it to all test administrators.) A detailed agenda for a facilitator-led Scoring Refresher session is in Section III, page 3.
- Additional helpful materials for facilitating the Scoring Refresher are in Sections III and V.
- Additional information and considerations for when to score are in Section III, page 2-3. A helpful flow chart is on page 3.
- Be prepared for a number of times where facilitators will need to pause, back up, or fast forward through the video or DVD as it is used in the Workbook.
- The Toolkit instructions state that you may read the sections of the Workbook either now or later while watching the video. There is important information in the Workbook that is not gone into as much detail in the video. Test administrators must read the entire Workbook at the same time as you are going through the video. Please pay particular attention to the "Summary" sections in the Workbook. Stop the video and read the corresponding section in the Workbook before moving on.

2. The Scoring Activity for Recertification
- Up to a week after the Scoring Refresher, BEST Plus test administrators and the facilitator are required to watch and score responses to a 30-minute Scoring Activity (which Activity will be announced each year in January). For more information, see Section IV of the Toolkit. The Refresher must be completed one week or less before doing the Scoring Activity.
- Use the red scoring video (located in the front of the Toolkit) and note your answers in the two perforated sheets in Appendix D of the Workbook.
Prior to completing the Scoring Activity assigned, please read and the Scoring Activity Instructions found in Section IV, pages 2-3, and then follow the instructions.

Test administrators must watch the Scoring Activity on site at the program and must strictly adhere to proper test procedure protocols (e.g., do not confer with each other during the test) **Do not stop, pause or rewind the video at any time or allow for discussion of any items.**

All Scoring Activities must be received by Joan Ford by the deadline identified in ACLS correspondence (usually the end of February). Submit the scores by mail or fax to Joan Ford (see contact information at the bottom of this page).

*Those who do not return the Scoring Activity by this date will not be able to administer the BEST Plus until re-taking the initial BEST Plus training, Refresher and Scoring Activity.*

The scoring activities will be scored and test administrators will know via email of their competency status by one month after their deadline for submission (usually the end of March). Scores will fall into three categories, based on the scoring system developed by BEST Plus test developers: “Recommended,” “Acceptable,” or “Unacceptable.” An explanation of scoring is found in Section IV, pages 4-5, 19 and 25. (Please note that pages 6-18 have been removed from the Toolkits.)

Test administrators receiving a new certificate will be valid to test for at least one year. Please note: no certificates will be given; **program staff must retain their email notification.**

Staff who receive a borderline “Acceptable” or “Unacceptable” score in any one of the three rubric areas will have an opportunity to receive remediation and may not administer the test until successfully completing remediation.

Send all scoring activities to:

Joan Ford, SABES Director of Assessment  
Address: Bristol Community College, 777 Elsbree Street, Building Q, Fall River, MA 02720  
Phone: (774) 357-2190  
Email: joan.ford@bristolcc.edu  
FAX: (508)730-3280