

Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS)

Massachusetts Adult Education Assessment Policies
BEST Plus 3.0 Test Administration Procedures
Fiscal Year 2026
(July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026)

Contents

Overview of the BEST Plus 3.0	1
Before BEST Plus 3.0 Administration	1
Required Test Materials	1
During BEST Plus 3.0 Administration	2
Following Test Administration Procedures	2
Using the Scoring Rubric	2
Remote Test Administration	2
After BEST Plus 3.0 Administration.....	2
BEST Plus 3.0 Scoring Monitor	2
Exit Criteria for NRS Advanced ESL Students.....	3
Contact Information and Support	3

Overview of the BEST Plus 3.0

The state's assessment policy requires programs to use the BEST Plus 3.0 test (computer-adaptive version only) for all ESOL students who enter at SPL 0-6 and exit ESOL services at SPL 7 and whose goal is to improve their oral proficiency in English (this includes ESOL students enrolled in workplace education programs, distance learning programs and students enrolled in Pre-Literacy ESOL classes).

The BEST Plus 3.0, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), is an individually administered, face-to-face scripted oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. It is a performance-based test that measures an ESOL learner's oral skills in three areas: Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication.

The software for the computer-adaptive version of the BEST Plus 3.0 is available to download from the test developer's website. The test administrator asks the examinee questions that appear on the computer screen, uses a rubric to determine the score for the responses, then enters the scores into the computer. (The examinee does not look at the screen, except for photo prompts, and does not operate the computer.) Based on scores entered, the computer determines the difficulty level of the subsequent questions.

As a result, the questions are appropriate for the student'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 10-40 minutes, depending on the proficiency level of the examinee. For more information, please see the BEST Plus 3.0 website at <https://www.cal.org/aea/bpv30/>.

Before BEST Plus 3.0 Administration

Required Test Materials

At the BEST Plus 3.0 initial training, participants receive the *Test Administrator's Guide* (TAG). The TAG is provided free of charge by ACLS. Programs must download the free testing software and purchase BEST Plus 3.0 test administrations from CAL.

The cost per administration depends on the total number purchased. For more information and to order online, programs can go to <https://www.cal.org/aea/resources/>.

When to use the BEST Plus 3.0, when to use the TABE CLAS-E Writing or Reading Assessment

Student SPL Level	Assessment to Use
All ESOL students:	Use the BEST Plus 3.0 or the TABE CLAS-E Reading or Writing Assessment
If an ESOL student's goal is to improve his/her speaking and listening skills:	Use the BEST Plus 3.0
If an ESOL student's goal is to improve his/her writing skills:	Use the TABE CLAS-E Writing Assessment

Student SPL Level	Assessment to Use
If an ESOL student’s goal is to improve his/her reading skills:	Use the TABE CLAS-E Reading Assessment

During BEST Plus 3.0 Administration

Certified test administrators must not administer the BEST Plus 3.0 to their own students.

Following Test Administration Procedures

Test administrators must follow the test directions in the BEST Plus 3.0 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 BEST Plus 3.0 TAG;
- 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 3.0 materials or test items without receiving prior written permission from the [Center for Applied Linguistics](#).

Using the Scoring Rubric

To ensure consistent BEST Plus 3.0 test scores statewide, all test administrators must review the BEST Plus 3.0 rubric and their notes from the BEST Plus 3.0 training prior to any scoring session.

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.

Remote Test Administration

The BEST Plus 3.0 test can be administered in person or remotely. Paper-based BEST Plus 3.0 tests are not allowed in MA ACLS-funded programs for pre- and post-testing purposes. The modality of the BEST Plus 3.0 can change only under specific and rare circumstances. See FY26 assessment policy 3 for more details on test modality change and remote testing guidelines.

After BEST Plus 3.0 Administration

BEST Plus 3.0 Scoring Monitor

Programs must designate one person as the BEST Plus 3.0 scoring monitor. The monitor compiles all the scores and maintains them in one place. That person ensures that rubric and scoring procedures are followed, and notes if any of the administrators’ 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 3.0 Scoring Monitor follows up with the CEA-UMass Amherst to ensure test administrators are scoring according to the BEST Plus 3.0 rubric and receive technical assistance. The BEST

Plus 3.0 scoring monitor's responsibilities can be carried out by the program's assessment coordinator or program's director.

Exit Criteria for NRS Advanced ESL Students

The exit criterion for BEST Plus 3.0 is a scale score of 850 and higher.

Students who pre-test at a scale score of 850 and above on the BEST Plus 3.0 during the fiscal year should be tested with CLAS-E Reading or CLAS-E Writing. If they score at the exit criterion on the CLAS-E pre-test as well, these students have maxed out of ESOL services and programs should refer them for more appropriate services.

Students who post-test at a scale score of 850 and above on the BEST plus 3.0 during the fiscal year may remain in the program until the end of the fiscal year.

The table below shows the BEST Plus 3.0 score ranges for the NRS educational functioning levels for ESL.

NRS ESL Level	BEST Plus 3.0 Scale Score Range
ESL Level 1 (Beginning ESL Literacy)	600-677
ESL Level 2 (Low Beginning ESL)	678-702
ESL Level 3 (High Beginning ESL)	703-726
ESL Level 4 (Low Intermediate ESL)	727-752
ESL Level 5 (High Intermediate ESL)	753-785
ESL Level 6 (Advanced ESL)	786-849
Exit criteria from NRS	850 and higher

Contact Information and Support

Contact Information

- BEST Plus 3.0 trainings: Kat Tremblay, April Zenisky
aclstesthelp@educ.umass.edu
- BEST Plus 3.0 policies: Dana Varzan-Parker
dana.varzan-parker@mass.gov, telephone: 781-338-3811

Resources

- BEST Plus 3.0 Certification and Recertification Procedures: [ACLS Test Help Blog](#)
- BEST Plus 3.0 trainings: [SABES Calendar](#)
- [BEST Plus 3.0 Good to Know Guides](#)
- [BEST Plus 3.0 test purchase](#)

