**Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS)**

**February 6, 2020**

# Q & A State as a Partner Assessment Webinar

**January 24, 2020**

**Question 1:** Is there anything we can test our high level ESOL students with if they test out of the level 4 TABE CLAS E?

**Answer:** In general, students who max out of ESOL services should transition to ABE services (if it fits their needs) or enroll in a bridge class and, once enrolled in this kind of class, be tested with the MAPT-CCR for Math and/or MAPT-CCR for Reading.

**Question** **2**: The current ESOL assessments do not meet the rigor of the MA ELPS or CCRS, and ESOL students often reach exit level without gaining the level of skill necessary to transition successfully to their next step, especially if that step is post-secondary. I think this is a federal issue. Is there anything MA DESE can do to help bridge this gap, and/or pressure for change at the federal policy level?

**Answer**: ACLS can and has advocated with the Office for Career and Technical Adult Education (OCTAE) on various issues. All National Reporting System (NRS) standardized assessments go through a thorough NRS approval process that ACLS has no influence on. Currently, there are no NRS assessments that are aligned to the national English Language Proficiency Standards for adult education. ACLS will notify the field when the NRS has approved an assessment aligned to these Standards.

**Question 3:** Are there assessments currently aligned to the National ELPS?

**Answer:** See answer to question 2 above.

**Question 4**: Is there anything we can test our high level ESOL students with if they test out of the level 4 TABE CLAS E?

**Answer**: See answer to question 1 above.

**Question 5:** So LACES designates the primary? Even if learner tests in multiple areas (e.g., reading, math, and language)?

**Answer**: The initial entry level policy replaces the former policy related to Primary Assessment Area (PAA).

The initial entry level, determined by the *first* assessment in the fiscal year, regardless of the number of Periods of Participation, places the student on the correct Educational Functioning Level (EFL) row on the NRS tables.

* If two or more pre-tests are administered in different content/skill areas, the test with the *lowest* *score* is, by default, indicated in LACES as the student's initial entry level if the two (or more) pre-tests are administered on the same date.
* If the two (or more) pre-tests are administered on different dates, the *earliest pre-test* becomes the initial entry level.

Programs **no longer** need to choose the student's initial placement test (formerly known as the PAA) based on the skill or content area (e.g., reading, math, writing, speaking, listening) in which the student needs to improve as expressed by the student or as determined by the program.

**Question 6:** Can the MAPT-CCR be administered before the start of class (before a student has any instructional hours)?

**Answer**: Yes, as long as the student is enrolled in a class and has a LACES ID.

**Question 7:** For the policy exception on post-testing, is there a minimum number of hours for consideration?

**Answer:** ACLS understands that there are valid reasons for occasionally post-testing earlier than the 65 hours allowed by the post-testing policy (e.g., a student leaving the program earlier than expected or teachers determining that a student is ready for a post-test earlier). Therefore, while the policy still mandates 65 instructional hours between tests (40 hours for students in Correctional Institutions), programs (including Correctional Institutions) can test at fewer hours when the rationales for those exceptions are realistic, within reason, and rare. Programs should use their best judgement when making this decision.

**Question 8:** Sometimes we have to test more than three times if TABE CLAS E indicates a student has scored too high or too low for the level given.

**Answer**: Yes, for situations when re-testing is required (see pages 50-52 of the [ACLS Assessment Policies Manual](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/)), a student will technically have more than three assessments in a fiscal year and the score from the re-test will be considered the student’s pre-test (or first test) score. Re-testing is different from post-testing.

**Question 9:** Does a rolled over test from the previous fiscal year count as one of the three assessments for the year?

**Answer**: Yes, a forwarded test score counts as one of the three assessments for the fiscal year.

**Question 10**: If a student takes three MAPT-CCR tests and shows learner gain on the second test, but on the third test actually goes down, is learner gain still awarded?

**Answer**: Yes, EFL progression is based on the first test score (pre-test) and best post-test score achieved in a PoP.

**Question 11:** It was my understanding that “rare” was removed.  That programs are encouraged to post as many students as possible who leave the program with less than 65 hours.  Can you please clarify?

**Answer**: ACLS encourages programs to use their best judgement when making such decisions. The word *rare* has not been removed from the post-testing exception policy (see page 8 of the [ACLS Assessment Policies Manual](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/)). ACLS will analyze test data as part of setting a more specific threshold.

**Question 12**: Is the CLAS E-Reading 588 or 558? Just noticing the notation of CLAS E-Reading exit is 588 in the policy manual-the chart shows 558 though on page 4.

**Answer:** NRS Level 4 for CLAS E Reading starts at 558. The exit criterion for CLAS E Reading is 588. Students placing at the Advanced ESOL level with a pre-test score below the exit score of 588 for CLAS-E Reading but at SPL 6 can still make EFL gain their if post-test score is 588 or above in reading.

**Question 13**: The assessment manual says**:** *Currently developing guidelines regarding timely data entry*.

**Answer**: ACLS will update the assessment manual to reflect the most recent data entry policy for assessment which is: NRS assessment scores must be entered within four weeks of test administration.

**Question 14:** Regarding the MAPT-CCR: if we have to post-test a student before the 65 hour requirement, do we have to report the reason for that in LACES?

**Answer**: LACES tracks the exceptions to the post-testing policy via a drop-down menu that is available only for BEST Plus 2.0, CLAS E Reading, CLAS E Writing, TABE 11/12, and TABE Literacy. Because MAPT-CCR scores are reported into LACES via OWL and not manually entered by program staff (as is the case with the other NRS assessment scores), programs that need to post-test students at fewer than 65 hours with the MAPT-CCR must contact OWL Technical Support using a MAPT-CCR test administrator account. OWL staff will manually release the MAPT-CCR test to be available for post-testing at fewer than 65 hours after receiving the following information:

* name of person submitting the request
* email of person submitting the request
* site
* student’s first and last name
* student’s LACES ID (MAPT)
* hours of attendance
* reason for request

**Question 15**: I'm newer to state assessment standards. Where can I get a copy of the assessment manual you mentioned?

**Answer**: The ACLS Assessment Policies Manual is available on the assessment section of the ACLS website here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/> .

**Question 16:** If a student takes a pre-test in both reading and math, will she/ he have to take a post test in both? Will we meet the requirement if there is a post-test only in the primary area?

**Answer**: The Primary Assessment Area Policy has been replaced by the Initial Entry Level policy (see answer to question 5 above). While a post-test is no required in both reading and math, programs are encouraged to post-test in both areas to increase likelihood of Measurable Skills Gains (MSG). As a reminder, programs will get one credit (i.e., 1.0) for the first MSG outcome earned and will get a *partial* credit (i.e., 0.1) for each *additional outcome* earned beyond the *initial*. If students in a program achieve an initial outcome and two additional outcomes, then the program's credit for that student is 1.2.

**Question 17**: The word "rare" for allowances to test with fewer than 65 hours is scary.  Can it be removed?  Or can it be defined more percentage-wise?

**Answer**: See answers to questions 7 and 11 above and questions 19 and 25 below.

**Question 18**: If we are a provider that only has ESOL seats, could we still use the MAPT-CCR for high level ESOL students?

**Answer**: Students receiving ESOL instruction should be pre- and post-tested with one (or more) of the NRS approved ESOL assessments used in Massachusetts (i.e., BEST Plus 2.0, CLAS E-Reading, CLAS E-Writing). Students receiving instruction in ABE should be pre- and post-tested with one (or more) of the NRS approved ABE assessments used in Massachusetts (i.e., MAPT-CCR for students in Community Adult Learning Centers and Corrections-where possible, TABE 11/12-for students in Corrections that cannot use the MAPT-CCR, TABE Literacy for students who are enrolled in Community Adult Learning Centers or Corrections and who function at a GLE range of 0 to 2).

**Question 19**: Is there a bare minimum of hours (under 65) that is acceptable to post-test? We all try to manage testing schedules to achieve the 65 hours but if a student is leaving, what is the absolute minimum that we can post-test after?

**Answer:** At this time, ACLS does not and will not mandate a minimum of hours for the post-testing policy. Programs should use their best judgement and other information they have about the student’s performance (e.g., formative assessment results, sufficient instructional hours to cover subject matter content/skills) when making decisions to post-test students at fewer than 65 hours.

**Question 20**: I know this is absolutely a federal issue -- and we don't have a lot of students in this category -- but there is a significant gap between where federal levels leave off and where students' next steps (college, career, training) pick up. I'd encourage MA DESE to advocate on this point with OCTAE!

**Answer**: See answer to question 2 above.

**Question 21**: Are the three assessment tests requirement or we can just do one pre- and one post-test?

**Answer**: Administering three assessments in a fiscal year is not a requirement as long as programs administer a pre-test and a post-test. The requirement is to not exceed three assessments in a fiscal year.

**Question 22:** The current policies state we can only test in one level of TABE Reading or Writing. What if someone tests out of Book 2 at 2nd test but does not show gain?

**Answer**: Programs are encouraged to review the CLAS-E Reading and Writing retesting guidelines before administering a CLAS-E pre-test. The guidelines can be found in the [ACLS Assessment Policies manual](http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/assessmentpolicies.docx) and the CLAS-E sections of the [ACLS Test Help Blog](https://blogs.umass.edu/aclstesthelp/clasereading/). If a student’s CLAS-E pre-test score is within the re-testing range, programs should re-test the student. Doing so might prevent the situation described in this question. If the post-test score is the maximum for the level administered and the student did not make gain, the student can be tested again (within the three assessments per fiscal year policy) with the next level CLAS E test.

**Question 23:** Will the assessment manual be updated with these changes?

**Answer**: Yes, the assessment manual will be updated and the revised version will be posted on the ACLS website. ACLS will notify the field when the updated version of the manual is posted.

**Question 24:** It seems like we are getting the "minimum numbers of hours not met" message in LACES even for students who have enough hours. To whom can I send screen shots?

**Answer**: Programs should email their assigned program specialist for specific program-related questions (e.g., LACES, assessment).

**Question 25:** If I have one student per class who I will test with about 50 hours, is that good enough to satisfy the rare requirement?

**Answer**: ACLS chose to not define the number of exceptions a program is allowed to have. This is because programs are different in size and student needs. Program directors/assessment coordinators should use their best judgement when employing the exception to the post-testing policy and are encouraged to discuss the specific reality and context of their own program with their assigned program specialist.

**Question 26:** I attended a training on how to read the score reports in conjunction with the interpretive guides.  Could a webinar be developed as a next steps after completing the MAPT-CCR training?

**Answer**: Yes, ACLS and the Center for Educational Assessment (CEA) at UMass Amherst are currently considering ways and a specific timeline to develop and offer MAPT-CCR score report trainings. In the interim, programs are encouraged to use the MAPT-CCR Score Report Quick Guides and Interpretive Guides for Math and Reading posted on the ACLS assessment page here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/> .

**Question 27**: Will you be CC-ing directors when you send recertification info to testers?

**Answer:** ACLS sent a copy of the BEST Plus 2.0 and CLAS-E Writing Scoring recertification instructions to all program directors. Between February and March, as practitioners submit their answers to the recertification Scoring Activity and/or the CLAS-E Writing Scoring Recertification Test, they will receive their results automatically via email and directors will receive a copy of the email. In April, once the recertification period is over, directors will receive an additional email listing the status of all BEST Plus 2.0 administrators and CLAS E-Writing scorers in their program. As explained in the BEST Plus 2.0 recertification instructions, please keep in mind that the UMass CEA created a new website to simplify the Scoring Activity submission process.