



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
H. Martin Lancaster, President

July 26, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Basic Skills Directors
English as a Second Language Coordinators
Volunteer/Community-Based Organization Directors

FROM: Patrick K. Pittman
Coordinator ABE/ESL

SUBJECT: ESL Standardized Assessment

According to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998, one of the core measures for Basic Skills is to indicate that students have demonstrated improvements in literacy skill levels in reading, writing and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem-solving, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills. In order to measure educational gains, the National Reporting System (www.air-dc.org/nrs/DraftGuidelines.htm) has established measures and methods for collecting this data. These methods include the following:

1. At intake, an individual learner's educational functioning level is determined within the functional level descriptors, using a uniform standardized assessment procedure approved by the state.
2. To determine gain, the learner should be assessed again at least once after a standard, instructional period, at the end of the class or at the end of the program year, as determined by state policy.

The standardized assessment instruments listed by the National Reporting System for use in ESL are the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and the Basic English Skills Test (BEST). The Life Skills/ESL components should be used from the CASAS. The Oral and/or Literacy components may be used from the BEST.

With regard to when you should perform post-testing in order to determine student progress, individual colleges must make that determination since many programs are implemented differently. However, take into consideration that, according to one project's estimates, it may take at least one hundred hours of instruction to advance to the next level. The most important point to remember is that all students should be post-tested at least once during a program year. In addition, if a student scores at a higher level, make sure that you indicate this progress through LEIS.

If your college chooses to use the CASAS for ESL assessment, please contact CASAS (www.casas.org) at 1-800-255-1036 ext. 310 to order the test. If your college chooses to use the BEST for ESL assessment, please contact the Center for Applied Linguistics (www.cal.org/public/bestest.htm) at 1-202-362-0700 to purchase the test. The System Office is currently planning training on the use of these two assessment instruments.

Enclosure

C: Dr. Randy Whitfield

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