

## New York State Education Department Policies for Using the TABE Test

### Overview

The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment was designed to provide achievement scores that are valid for most types of adult education decision-making. New York State requires administration of the TABE tests for all students seeking entry into Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs supported by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title 2, Welfare Education Program (WEP), Employment Preparation Education (EPE) and the Adult Literacy Education (ALE) funding for the purpose of reporting educational gain as required by the federal National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education. The TABE should also be used for students seeking entry into Occupational Education Programs to determine whether they have sufficient literacy skills to succeed in the program although these students are not included in the NRS.

### Basic Assessment Policies

General assessment policies can be found in the New York State Education Department's NRS manual which can be found at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/workforce/offices/adult.html>. The following policies are relevant to TABE testing:

1. All students must be tested within 12 hours of intake. This test is considered to be a pre-test.
2. New York State allows the use of the TABE 7&8 and 9&10 full batteries. **Beginning in the 2006-07 program year, the use of the TABE Survey will no longer be allowed.** (This is a new policy which will appear in the next revision of the NRS manual.) There are four core content areas: Reading, Mathematics Computation, Applied Mathematics, and Language. There are five overlapping levels – L (Literacy), E (Easy), M (Medium), D (Difficult), and A (Advanced). Agencies are required to at least use the E, M, and D levels.
3. The Locator test must be administered to determine the appropriate level of the TABE test to administer. The locator is used as follows:

#### For TABE 7 & 8

Reading	Mathematics	TABE Level to Administer
# Correct	# Correct	
6 and Below	6 and Below	E
7 - 10	7 - 11	M
11 - 14	12 - 15	D
15 and Above	16 and Above	A

### For TABE 9 & 10

Reading	Mathematics	TABE Level to Administer
# Correct	# Correct	
6 and Below	4 - 6	E
7 - 8	7 - 8	M
9 - 10	9 - 11	D
11 - 12	12 - 16	A

The correct locator must be used for the test. The locator for the 7 & 8 cannot be used for the 9 & 10 and vice versa.

**Level L** –As stated in the NRS manual, if an agency serves students pre-testing on NRS level 1 in reading, either the TABE L or the READ test must be used for the initial test. Once a student tests on level NRS 2 the TABE E should be used.

- **TABE 7 & 8** - For the TABE 7 & 8, there is only a level L in reading. If a student scores on the lowest end of the scale in reading on the locator test, the level L Word List can be used to determine whether level L or E is appropriate. Students can not be placed on NRS level 1 in mathematics using the TABE 7 & 8.
- **TABE 9 & 10** - For the TABE 9 & 10 there is a level L for reading, mathematics computation and applied mathematics. If a student scores on the lowest end of the scale in reading on the locator test, the level L Word List can be used to determine whether level L or E is appropriate. If a student scores in the lowest end of the scale in mathematics, teachers should use previous knowledge of the examinee's performance to determine whether the E or L should be administered.

For students on the lowest levels of reading and mathematics, it is not necessary or recommended to place them in NRS level 1 based on a TABE 9 & 10 score in mathematics. In these cases, only the reading score should be entered for NRS purposes. When the student's skill level increases so that the student can be tested with the level E in mathematics, then the scores can be entered if appropriate.

4. Students must be tested to determine whether they are making educational gain as follows:
  - Students in a class that meets ten or more hours per week should be post-tested at least at the end of every 200 instructional hours.
  - Students in a class that meets nine hours or less per week should be post-tested at least at the end of every 100 instructional hours.
  - Students in a tutorial program should be post-tested at least at the end of each fifty hours of instruction.

This means that a student in a traditional classroom must be post-tested after 100 or 200 hours of instruction depending on intensity of instruction. An instructor may provide 200

hours of instruction, but only the student attending every hour of every session will receive 200 hours of instruction. The amount of instruction students receive will vary greatly based on attendance. Post-testing can be done in groups for students who have received a similar number of hours of instruction.

These guidelines are at-a-minimum. Students may be tested more frequently. The agency should determine whether more frequent testing is advisable. This should be done after reviewing NRS data to determine the average number of hours students remain so that students can be tested before they exit the program. More frequent testing may generate post-testing scores for students who otherwise might have left the program. However too frequent testing may not generate gain scores because not enough instruction has taken place. Also, testing can be stressful for adult students who are often anxious about testing.

5. Test administrators need not be certified teachers. However, all TABE test administrators must receive training in proper test administration through the Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN).
6. For the NRS, the use of the Reading, Mathematics Computation, and Applied Mathematics is required. The Mathematics Computation and Applied Mathematics tests must be used together to yield a total mathematics score that is reported to the US Department of Education. Both the mathematics tests and the reading test must be administered in programs focusing on both reading and mathematics. However, if a program focuses only on mathematics or only on reading, the mathematics tests or the reading test can be administered alone. Most typically this is the case with some distance learning programs that focus exclusively on one area such as Learn to Read, Another Page, or Math Basics.
7. To compute a Total Mathematics score it is necessary for the student to take the same form and level of both the Mathematics Computation test and the Applied Mathematics test.
8. When post-testing on the same level (e.g., pretest was on level M and post-test is on level M also) a different form of the test must be used. For example, the student is pre-tested on TABE Level M with form 7 and is to be post-tested on Level M, form 8 should be used. If the student is post-tested on a higher level, in the above example if the pre-test is on the higher range of level M, level D would be the higher level for post-testing and either form 7 or 8 can be used. Students pre-tested with form 7 or 8 cannot be post-tested with forms 9 or 10. Students pre-tested with form 9 or 10 cannot be post-tested with forms 7 or 8.

### **Retesting Guidelines**

Staff development on the TABE test has stressed the need to use the correct form and level of the test and the need to retest when scores are in the extreme range of the individual test making them unreliable. The Norms Books for the tests indicate that the Standard Error of

Measurement (SEM) escalates rapidly at the extreme range of each test. As the SEM increases, the test scores become less reliable i.e. may not be a true indication of the student's ability. However, most test administrators do not have the technical expertise to understand the concept of SEM much less to make a testing decision based on it. For this reason, SED decided to establish a clear policy regarding when a student's test score on the TABE falls outside of an acceptable range and retesting is required on either a more difficult or easier test.

Using a methodology developed for the State of Massachusetts Education Department, by the University of Massachusetts, a model was developed that would require only the most reliable range of test scores to be used. The attached tables identify the acceptable ranges for the TABE 7 & 8 and the TABE 9 & 10 levels L through A for Reading, Mathematics Computation and Applied Mathematics. Agencies are required to use minimally levels E, M and D.

Teachers should administer the locator to identify the appropriate level to test. After the test is administered, the attached tables should be used to determine whether the student's score is within or outside of the acceptable range of scores on that test and level. If the score is within the acceptable range, the test can be considered valid. If the score is outside of the acceptable range the test administrator should follow the directions regarding whether to retest with a more or less advanced test. The table indicates when more or less advanced tests are not available.

During the 2006-07 program year, the ALIES system will be modified so that scores outside of the acceptable ranges will not be accepted. An ALIES update will be provided in which only scores in the acceptable range can be entered. This will go into effect on October 1, 2006.