



**TrackOne - Technical Guidance Bulletin
TTGB – 2006-01**

TO: Regional Operators
Service Providers
Regional Coordinators

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SUBJECT: Youth Testing Requirements (Out-of-School)

Pre Testing

Basic reading/writing and math testing is required for all out-of-school youth receiving their first WIA youth funded service on July 1, 2006 and after.

Post Testing

Out-of-school youth determined basic literacy skills deficient must be re-tested using the same assessment tool used in the pre test.

Post Testing Interval:

- Participants identified as basic skills deficient must be post-tested at least once by the end of year one following the individual's date of first youth program service.
- For participants who have completed one year following the date of first youth program service, if more than one assessment is administered after the initial test, the latest assessment within one year of first youth program service will be used to determine if the participant has demonstrated an increase in at least one educational functioning level.
- Individuals who remain basic skills deficient and continue to participate after completing a full year in the program, including pre-test and post-test, must continue to receive basic skills remediation services. These participants will be included in the literacy and numeracy performance measure for the first year of participation. They are not included again in this measure until they have completed a second full year in the program. At the completion of the second year, these participants must be included in the measure using the latest post-test score during the second year. To determine an increase of one or more levels, the participant's latest post-test score from the second year in the program will be compared to the score from the test that was administered at the latest point during the first year. If an individual remains basic skills deficient following the second year of the program, that individual will be included in the measure a third time if they complete a third full year in the program. This rule applies for the entire time they are in the program.

Operational Parameters

- Basic literacy skills deficient means the participant is a person who computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the 8th grade level or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.
- In-school youth are excluded from this testing requirement. (Note: determination of in-school or out-of-school status is only made at the date of first youth program service.)
- It is allowable to use pre-tests that are administered up to six months prior to the date of first WIA youth service, if such pre-test scores are available. If prior pre-tests are not available, administration of a pre-test must occur within 60 days following the date of first youth program service.
- The testing intervals are based on "date of first youth program service" rather than date of participation because date of participation is defined as the earliest date of service from any program if a participant receives services from multiple programs. It is possible for the participation date of youth to be prior to the date of first WIA youth service if a different program served such a youth earlier (such as the adult program). Date of first WIA youth service is used to ensure that this data is based on a "youth participation date" rather than the initial participation date.
- Individuals who are determined not to be basic skills deficient based on pre-test results are excluded from post testing.
- When administering assessment tools, individuals with disabilities (as defined in 29 CFR Part 37.4) should be accommodated according to: (1) Section 188 of WIA: 29 CFR Part 37, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title H of the Americans with Disabilities Act, (2) guidelines associated with the assessment tool used to determine functioning levels. Further guidance can be found in TEGl 17-05 under *Testing Youth with Disabilities*.
- Individuals who are given an initial assessment but do not receive a post-test before exiting the program will be considered negative outcomes for the literacy and numeracy measure.
- To be considered a positive outcome on the literacy and numeracy measure, a participant must demonstrate on a post-test that he/she has advanced one or more educational functioning levels beyond the level in which he/she was initially placed at pre-test within one year from the date of first youth program service. (Note: the one-year time period is from date of first youth program service, not date of pre-test.)
- All out-of-school youth must be assessed in basic reading/writing and math.

Considerations

The literacy and numeracy gains indicator measures the increase in skills of participants through a common assessment tool administered at program entry and regular intervals thereafter. Youth participants for whom the goal of literacy and/or numeracy gains is most appropriate are those with basic skills deficiencies. Participants who are not basic skills deficient cannot achieve a positive outcome because they have attained basic literacy and numeracy. Exclusion of individuals who are not basic skill deficient focuses the measure on the participants with the greatest need for remediation, and minimizes the burden of testing individuals who, by virtue of their existing skill level, will not achieve a positive outcome.

In-school youth already undergo a number of assessments within the school system. Requiring in-school youth to receive further academic assessments outside of the school system is redundant since it is the responsibility of local school districts to ensure proper academic assessment of in-school youth. Therefore, in-school youth are excluded from this testing requirement.

Under a normal distribution of pre-test scores, most participants' scores will place the individuals in a range indicating they have completed some of the skills in that particular educational functioning level. Therefore, for a majority of participants, a positive outcome for the literacy and numeracy measure (i.e., completion of one educational functioning level and an increase to the next level) is not likely to require the equivalent of completing two grade levels, but will average to the equivalent of one grade level.

Educational Functioning Levels (See TEGL 17-05, Attachment C for Educational Functioning Level Descriptors)

- Unless a previous assessment was conducted within six months prior to participation, programs must assess participants at intake or within 60 days following the date of first youth program service to determine their initial educational functioning level. As outlined in the NRS, there are two sets of educational functioning levels – six levels for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and six levels for English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) students. ABE levels roughly equate to two grade levels. Further guidance on the educational level descriptors can be found in Attachment C of TEGL 17-05.
- Each ABE and ESL level describes a set of skills and competencies that students entering at that level demonstrate in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional, and workplace skills. These descriptors provide guidelines for placing participants in educational functioning levels, based on performance on standardized tests. After a participant has completed a uniform, standardized assessment procedure, programs use these descriptors to determine the appropriate initial ABE or ESL level in which to place students.

- If a participant is functioning at different levels in reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional, and workplace areas, the individual is placed in different ABE and ESL levels across the functioning areas. In the post-test assessment, if the participant demonstrates an increase to the next functioning level in any of the areas – reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional, and workplace areas – he/she has made an educational gain and should be included in the numerator. For example, an individual is placed in the Beginning Basic Education level (the second ABE level) in math and the Low Intermediate Basic Education level (the third ABE level) in reading at pre-testing. The individual achieves an educational gain if he/she places in either the third ABE level in math or the fourth ABE level in reading at post-testing.

Assessment Tool

- To measure the increase in skills of individuals, programs must use an assessment procedure comprised of a standardized test or a performance assessment with standardized scoring protocols that crosswalk directly to the NRS educational functioning levels. Therefore, WIA Youth programs must use one of the assessment tools listed in Attachment C of TEGL 17-05.
- Programs are not required to use the same assessment tool throughout the Region. However, WIA Youth programs must adhere to the following in choosing an assessment tool:
 1. The same assessment tool is administered to the participant for pre-testing and post-testing;
 2. The assessment tool and its scores must crosswalk directly to the educational functioning levels so that educational gains can be reported in terms of increase in one or more ABE or ESL levels; and
 3. Tests must be administered in a standardized manner throughout the Region (i.e., used consistently and reliably across programs and produce observable results).
- Tests must be administered to individuals with disabilities (as defined in 29 CFR 27.4) with reasonable accommodations, as appropriate (see additional guidance under *Testing Youth with Disabilities* in TEGL 17-05).
- The NRS provides test benchmarks for educational functioning levels (see Attachment C of TEGL 17-05). The benchmarks are provided as examples of how students functioning at each level would perform on the tests.

Testing Youth with Disabilities

When administering assessment tools, individuals with disabilities are to be provided with reasonable accommodations, as appropriate, according to:

- Section 188 of the WIA (implementing regulations at 29 CFR Part 37), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (DOL implementing regulations at 29 CFR Part 32), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, if applicable (implementing regulations at 28 CFR Part 35) taking into consideration; and
- Guidelines associated with the assessment test.

Regulations implementing WIA Section 188, found at 29 CFR Part 37, provide a general definition of “reasonable accommodation” for individuals with disabilities. In essence, such accommodations are “modifications of adjustments,” made on a case-by-case basis, “that enable a qualified individual with a disability...to receive aid, benefits, services, or training equal to that provided to qualified individuals without disabilities.” (See 29 CFR Part 37.4, definition of “reasonable accommodation.”) In the assessment context, therefore, accommodations are changes that are made to the materials or procedures used for the assessment in order to “level the playing field” to ensure that the assessment tool measures the individual’s skills and abilities, and not his or her disabilities. Because youth with disabilities are expected to achieve the same gains as other youth, it is critically important that appropriate accommodations be provided for the assessment process, to ensure that the gains achieved by these youth can be determined accurately.

Accommodations for the assessment process generally fall into the following categories:

- Changes to the methods of presentation of the test used as an assessment tool: e.g., providing Braille versions of the test, or orally reading the directions or test questions to test-takers;
- Changes to the methods of response to the test questions: e.g., having the test-taker point to a response or use a computer for responding;
- Changes to the setting in which the test is provided: e.g., permitting the test to be taken at home, or in small groups, rather than in a large-group or institutional setting; and
- Changes to the timing/scheduling of the test: e.g., extending the amount of time generally provided for completion of the test, permitting frequent breaks, etc.

ETA fully expects that most youth with disabilities can, and should, be assessed using tests that specifically crosswalk to educational functioning levels, using accommodations where needed. ETA also recognizes that in very limited instances, use of these testing instruments, even with appropriate accommodations, may not provide a valid or reliable evaluation of the literacy and numeracy skills of a youth with one or more disabilities. These instances may arise because of the nature or extent of a particular individual’s disability, and/or because of limitations in the testing instruments themselves. In those rare instances, service providers may use alternate assessment tools to measure gains in numeracy and literacy for youth with disabilities. Such alternate tools may include, but are not limited to: (1) portfolio assessments; (2) one-on-one performance assessments; and (3) alternative standardized tests. **DWD approval will be required for each instance requiring alternate assessment tools.** Requests for approval should be directed to the TrackOne help desk (317-436-4060).

Score Reporting In TrackOne

Case Managers and end users of the TrackOne system are to enter raw score data from the selected assessment tool. Depending upon the selected assessment tool, TrackOne will allow for the Case Manager to enter raw scores for each of the subtests within the selected assessment tool.

