



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

WIA YOUTH DIRECTIVE

Number: LACOD-WIAD09-02

Subject: Literacy and Numeracy Gains:
Acceptable Assessment Tools

Date: 01/08/09

Effective Date: Immediately

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OVERVIEW

The Los Angeles County Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA), operating under the direction of the Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board (LACWIB), is committed to providing results-oriented programs, which focus on performance rather than process, and to delivering high quality, effective workforce development services to WIA youth participants that result in desired employment, education and skill attainment outcomes. To ensure the achievement of this objective, the County has implemented a performance accountability system, as required under WIA, which has at its core the common measures developed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) for programs managed by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). Among the common measures for youth are literacy and numeracy gains, which must be appropriately assessed to determine an increase in skills. The assessment tools that are acceptable for this process are the subject of this directive. This directive will be amended/updated when the State EDD issues a policy and/or guidance on this subject.

Purpose:

The purpose of this directive is to provide information regarding acceptable assessment tools for measuring educational functioning levels (EFLs) associated with attainment of literacy and numeracy gains under the common measures now in use under WIA.

Scope:

The policy guidance expressed in the directive reflects the ETA's WIA common measurements policy communicated in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 17-05 and TEGL 17-05 Change 1 (described below). As the subject of the directive is the assessment tools that are acceptable for measuring literacy/numeracy gains, this policy applies exclusively to operators of WIA Youth programs.

Effective Date:

This directive is effective on the date of its issuance.

Definitions:

The following description provides a definition of the term “educational functional level,” often referred to as “EFLs.”

The National Reporting System (NRS) was developed by the U.S. Department of Education to implement an accountability system. ETA has adopted policies for “educational gains” based on those outlined in the NRS. These include educational functional levels, which are sets of skills and competencies demonstrated by students entering at that 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.

The levels ABE and ESL are:

<u>ABE</u>	<u>ESL</u>
Beginning ABE Literacy	Beginning ESL Literacy
Beginning Basic Education	Low Beginning ESL Literacy
Low Intermediate Basic Education	High Beginning ESL Literacy
High Intermediate Basic Education	Low Intermediate ESL
Low Adult Secondary Education	High Intermediate ESL
High Adult Secondary Education	Advanced ESL

NOTE: *TEGL 17-05 Change 1 (dated August 13, 2007) specifically addresses clarifications/modifications regarding the literacy/numeracy measures, including EFLs. Please refer to the following attachments to TEGL 17-05 Change 1 for the most current EFL references:*

- *Attachment A: REVISED EFL Descriptor Levels*
- *Attachment B: EFL Crosswalk*

References:

ETA has published two notices communicating its policy and additional guidance on the common measures. TEGL 17-05 serves as a single, unified DOL guidance document on the common measures and the WIA performance accountability system (WIA Section 136). ETA later issued TEGL 17-05 - Change 1, which clarifies the application of the literacy/numeracy measure and addresses specific reporting requirements for this measure.

Following are hyperlinks to the two TEGL’s concerning the common measures.

- [TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 17-05](#) (Common Measures Policy for the Employment and Training Administration’s Performance Accountability System and Related Performance Issues – dated February 17, 2006); and
- [TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 17-05, Change 1](#) (Common Measures Policy for the Employment and Training Administration’s

Performance Accountability System and Related Performance – dated August 13, 2007)

Additional references include:

- WIA Section 136 – *Performance Accountability System*
- Title 20 CFR 666 – *Performance Accountability under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act*
- State EDD Workforce Investment Act Directive WSD08-6 (October 7, 2008) – *State and LWIA Performance Goals for PY 2007-2008*
- State EDD Workforce Investment Act Information Notice WSIN07-33 (February 5, 2008) – *Approval of Common Measures Waiver Request*

BACKGROUND

The common measures now serve as the core of the WIA performance accountability in the Los Angeles County LWIA. As acknowledged by DOL, the value of implementing the common measures is the ability to describe the central purposes of the workforce system.

There are three common measures that apply to programs serving adults and three common measures that apply to programs serving youth:

<u>Adult Measures</u>	<u>Youth Measures</u>
Entered Employment	Placement in Employment or Education
Employment Retention	Attainment of a Degree or Certificate
Average Earnings	Literacy and Numeracy Gains

Common Measures Methodology:

The methodologies of the common measures are written as an equation, clearly identifying who is in the numerator and who is in the denominator. The methodology for calculating the literacy and numeracy gains indicator is as follows:

Of those out-of-school youth who are basic skills deficient:

*The number of youth participants who increase one or more EFLs divided by the number of participants who have completed a year in the youth program (i.e., one year from the date of first youth program service) **plus** the number of participants who exit before completing a year in the youth program.*

Attachment B to TEGL 17-05 defines an “out-of-school youth” as an eligible youth who is a school dropout, or who has received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent but, is basic skills deficient, unemployed, or underemployed (WIA section 101(33)). For reporting purposes, this term includes all youth except: (i) those who are attending any school and have not received a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or (ii) those who are attending post-secondary school and are not basic skills deficient.

Program operators should note that a participant demonstrating through the post-test an increase to the next functioning level in any of the ABE or ESL areas (reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional and workplace areas) has made an educational gain and should be included in the numerator.

The Literacy and Numeracy Measure:

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 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 skills deficient focuses the measure on 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 under this measure.

In school youth already undergo a number of assessments within the school system in order to comply with state learning standards. 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 measure.

POLICY/PROCEDURES

Pursuant to the policy guidance expressed in DOL ETA's TEGL 17-05 and TEGL 17-05 Change 1, the County has adopted the following policies and procedures regarding acceptable assessments tools for measuring youth participants' achievement of literacy and numeracy gains.

Policy:

It is the policy of the Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Area that:

1. To measure an increase in skills of individual, programs must use an assessment procedure comprised of a standardized test or a performance assessment with standardized scoring procedures that crosswalk directly to the NRS EFLs. Therefore, programs must use one of the following assessment tools:

For ABE levels:

- Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
- Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE)
- WorkKeys

For ESL levels:

- CASAS

- Basic English Skills Test (BEST)
- BEST Plus

Contractors should refer to Attachment A of TEGL 17-05 Change 1 for a precise listing of assessment instruments capable of measuring participant skills at each level.

2. Contractors must adhere to the following in choosing and implementing an assessment tool:
 - a. The same assessment tool is administered to the participant for pre-testing and post-testing.
 - b. The assessment tool and its scores must crosswalk directly to the EFLs so that educational gains can be reported in terms of increase in one of more ABE or ESL levels; and
 - c. Tests must be administered in a standardized manner (i.e., used consistently and reliably across programs and produce observable results).
3. The NRS provides test benchmarks for EFLs. These are described within Attachment A of TEGL 17-05 Change 1. The benchmarks are provided as examples of how students functioning at each level would perform on the tests.
4. Tests must be administered to individuals with disabilities with reasonable accommodations, as appropriate.

Procedures:

WIA Youth Program contractors must adopt and put into practice procedures to implement the above-described policy, which will include, but not necessarily be limited to the following:

1. Use of an acceptable assessment tool (as indicated above) to measure EFL literacy and numeracy gains.
2. Processes to administer assessments, testing intervals and recording/maintenance of assessment results.
3. Processes (including accommodations) for testing youth with disabilities.

In addition to complying with this County's policies, as expressed within this directive, contractor procedures must comply with all other requirements communicated within TEGL 17-05 and TEGL 17-05 Change 1.

ACTIONS

Los Angeles County WIA Youth Program Contractors should ensure that the policies and procedures described herein are communicated throughout the operations, management and governance structure of the contractor organization and that this directive is appropriately maintained until further notice.

INQUIRIES

Inquiries regarding this directive and the policies and procedures described herein should be directed to Maggie Mireles, Program Manager at (213) 738-2918 or mmireles@css.lacounty.gov or to Robert Brieff at (213) 351-8924 or rbrieff@css.lacounty.gov.

**Josie Marquez, Executive Director
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