

Adult Education Block Grant

Measuring Student Progress in
Basic Skills and ESL

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White Paper for Basic Skills
Assessment Committee
Meeting 1

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Overview

This paper was prepared for the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG) Basic Skills Assessment Field Committee. The purpose of the Basic Skills Assessment Field Committee is to propose definitions for outcomes, measurable skills gains, and assessment processes for adult learners in consortia receiving AEBG funds allocated by the state under AB104 (2015; Chapter 13, Sec's 38, 39 and 40, ed 84830 and 84900). This paper includes the following:

- Background on AEBG including a description of the AEBG population(s) and scope, reporting requirements, alignment with WIOA, and AEBG program definitions.
- A review of WIOA Title II and National Reporting System requirements for assessment and reporting of adult education students in ABE, ASE and ESL programs in California.
- Information about the community college system common assessment, multiple measures and other initiatives to assess and measure student skills gains in math, English, and ESL.

Background Information

AEBG Population and Scope

For this paper, the definitions of the population and purposes for adult education is based on the 2012 Legislative Analyst Office's (LAO) report on adult education in California, which included: **1.** Immigrants wanting to learn English, obtain citizenship or receiving job training; **2.** Native English speakers with limited basic literacy skills; **3.** Adults seeking to obtain their HS diploma or equivalency; **4.** High School graduates in need of additional basic skills support to participate in postsecondary education; or **5.** Unemployed or low skilled adults seeking short term vocational training to improve their economic situation.

The LAO report stresses the need to clarify the distinctions between collegiate and pre-collegiate education to better define roles across the K12 and college systems including the key definition that the overarching goal of adult education is to transition more adults into postsecondary education. The LAO identifies the overlapping work of K12 Adult, CC noncredit and college credit systems in basic skills, ESL and short term vocational training, and recommends that the systems come together to clarify roles, build more integrated frameworks across systems, and expand capacity to serve more adult learners more effectively.

AB86 and AB104, which led to the implementation of AEBG did not include clear guidance the scope of AEBG or target populations. As a result initial reporting of capacity under

AB86 and of baseline data under AB104 included all K12, college noncredit, and for credit basic skills and ESL students.

AEBG reporting guidelines implemented for 2016/17 included the stipulation that reporting only include AEBG funded students, which eliminated both college for credit basic skills/ESL students and large numbers of college noncredit students funded through apportionment. This created concern from the field that reporting did not adequately capture the full level of activity by AEBG consortia or new capacity being built in the field which leveraged community college apportionment, Perkins and other funding resources related to AEBG. In response, CDE and the Chancellors office revisited the issue of the AEBG population for reporting and issued *preliminary* guidance that students subject to reporting for AEBG include:

- All students enrolled in the 7 AB104 program areas in K12 Adult Education and Community College noncredit programs.
- Students in short term for credit CTE (pending further exploration) programs.

This designation represented the desire of the State agencies to emphasize the importance of K12 AE and CC noncredit for increasing post-secondary transition for adult learners with educational deficits. K12 AE and CC noncredit courses offer more flexibility for adult learners returning to education including open-entry-open-exit courses, allowance for course repetition, and enable students to build competencies and skills without the penalty of a transcripted that could negatively impact their ability to transfer to a four year institution later. The inclusion of credit short-term CTE certificates recognizes that many colleges have built these credentials as on-ramps into more advanced certificate and degree sequences, and that many consortia are integrating K12, adult education, CDCP, and credit course sequences as transition mechanisms for college and career pathways.

Data and Accountability Requirements Under AEBG

AB104 (2015; Sec. 39) established the Adult Education Block Grant Program and provided a funding stream for the maintenance of existing adult education programs, program expansion and integration with post-secondary education. Section 39 included detailed requirements for consortia governance, fund distribution, and alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Investment Act (WIOA), Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act (Perkins), Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), apportionment, and other resources. It also established (Sec. 40) core measures for assessing the effectiveness of consortia, including:

- 1) The number of adults served by the consortium.
- 2) The number of adults served by the consortium that have demonstrated the following:

- a. Improved literacy skills.
- b. Completion of high school diplomas or their recognized equivalents.
- c. Completion of post-secondary certificates, degrees, or training programs.
- d. Placement into jobs.
- e. Improved wages. [ed 84920(c)]

AB104 established timelines for reporting progress in establishing accountability measures, aligning assessments, and yearly reporting to the legislature. This included identifying measures for assessing the effectiveness of consortia (Aug 1, 2017), options for integrating assessments with the community college common assessment and federal programs (Aug 1, 2017), annual preliminary reports on the previous year's performance (October 1), and final reports on the previous year (March 1).

To date, there have been two rounds of student data collection under AEBG: 1) collection of student baseline data in August 2016 for the 2015-16 program year; and 2) preliminary collection of 2016-17 student data in April 2017, using the mandated TOPSpro Enterprise (TE) reporting system. On August 1, 2017 consortia will report their 2016-17 student end-of-year data. Additionally, WIOA Title II participants will be matched with state wage data in summer 2017. In late 2017, the Chancellor's Office plans to roll out an Adult Education tab of the LaunchBoard that will match TE data from 2016-17 with the community college system's student and wage data.

AEBG and WIOA Alignment

AB104 requires the alignment of AEBG with WIOA, including: 1) alignment of AEBG, WIOA, and other regional plans; 2) coordination of AEBG funding with disbursement of funds under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II); and 3) data sharing requirements between CDE, CCCCO, the California Workforce Development Board and other relevant state agencies.

WIOA includes four program areas, which are administered by different state agencies:

- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services (California Workforce Development Board).
- Title II Adult and Family Literacy Act (California Department of Education).
- Title III Wagner Peyser (Employment Development Department).
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (Department of Rehabilitation).

AEBG consortia primarily administer Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFL) funds under WIOA Title II, however both K12 adult schools and community colleges may serve as training providers or career center operators under a local workforce board or county agency related to Titles, I, III, or IV. All WIOA programs are subject to the same

list common indicators of performance specified under the act. AEBG measures of effectiveness are aligned with the WIOA measures, as demonstrated in the table below.

WIOA	AEBG
Measurable skills gains	Improved literacy skills
Credential attainment	Completion of high school diplomas or their recognized equivalents
	Completion of post-secondary certificates, degrees, or training programs
Employment rate – 2 nd quarter after exit	Placement into jobs
Employment rate – 4 th quarter after exit	
Median earnings – 2 nd quarter after exit	Improved wages
Effectiveness in serving employers	

At the recent meeting of the AEBG Data and Accountability Committee, a preliminary recommendation was made to also measure whether students had attained the regional living wage, which is also used for the Strong Workforce Program.

It is worth noting that while the outcomes reporting required by the legislature set the bar high, they are also very direct and straight-forward: increased literacy, diplomas, certificates and degrees, employment, and earnings. This reflects the broader framework of AB86 and AB104 which sets the focus of adult education much more squarely on jobs and careers. In ABE, ASE, ESL (referred to collectively as basic skills in this paper), this can be seen in the increase emphasis on integrated education and training, such as vocational ABE (VABE) and vocational ESL (VESL). This parallels the implementation of WIOA, which now frames employment and earnings as outcomes for adult literacy programs under Title II in addition to the more traditionally employment-related parts of the act (Title I Workforce Services, Title III Vocational Rehabilitation, and Title IV Wagner Peyser).

The WIOA indicators include measurable skills gains for participants in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment, including:

- 1) Achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the post-secondary education level;
- 2) Attainment of a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent;

- 3) Secondary/post-secondary transcript or report card that shows a participant is meeting the state’s academic standards – 12 credit hours in a semester if enrolled full-time or 12 credit hours over a year if enrolled part-time;
- 4) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of on the job training or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or
- 5) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.¹

Just like Titles I, III, and IV, AEFLA Title II adult literacy programs are intended to result in post-secondary credentials or employment and are subject to the measurable skills gain indicators *and* the post-exit outcome indicators.

AEFG Programs

AB86 described five programs that consortia were required to address in their consortium plans (Sec. 76). AB104 described seven programs that were allowable uses of AEFG funding (Sec. 39). AB104 also amended the original five AB86 program areas, replacing apprenticeship with pre-apprenticeship and adding requirements for civics education.

AB86/AB104 Section 38	AB104 Sec. 39: Adult Educ. Block Grant
Funds used by each regional consortium to create and implement a plan to better provide adults in its region with <u>all</u> of the following:	Funds apportioned for the program shall be used only for support of the following:
(1) Elementary and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.	(1) Programs in elementary and secondary basic skills, including programs leading to a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.
(2) Classes and courses for immigrants eligible for services in citizenship and ESL, and workforce preparation classes in basic skills.	(2) Programs for immigrants eligible for services in citizenship, ESL, and workforce preparation.
	(3) Programs for adults, including, but not limited to, older adults, primarily related to entry or reentry into the workforce.
	(4) Programs for adults, including, but not limited to, older adults, primarily designed to develop knowledge and skills to assist elementary and secondary school children to succeed academically in school.

¹ US Department of Education: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (2016); “Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-2: Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV Core Programs. <http://www.nrsweb.org/foundations/Program%20Memorandum%2017-2%20OCTAE.pdf>

(3) Education programs for adults with disabilities.	(5) Programs for adults with disabilities.
(4) Short-term career technical education programs with high employment potential.	(6) Career technical education that is short-term in nature and has high employment potential.
(5) Pre-apprenticeship training in coordination with one or more apprenticeship programs approved by the Department of Apprenticeship Standards for the occupation and geographic area.	(7) Pre-apprenticeship training in coordination one one or more apprenticeship programs approved by the Department of Apprenticeship Standards for the occupation and geographic area.

While AEBG expands the program areas originally defined in AB86 from five to seven, it by no means provides a directive that consortia must provide programming beyond the originally-defined five programs.

Other Definitions Relevant to ABE, ASE, and ESL Programs: Adult Secondary Programs are distinguished from Adult Basic programs in that their goal is a State recognized high school diploma, meaning that the levels for Math, English, and writing generally correspond to those of a regular K12 high school. ABE programs focus on adults with much lower basic literacy and numeracy skills, often at what are considered to be pre-literate levels.

AEBG ABE, ASE, and ESL program descriptions closely follow those of the US Department of Education and the National Reporting System for Adult Education (see below) in that they include an emphasis functional literacy and numeracy skills supporting improved civic and workforce participation and readiness. WIOA distinguishes ‘workforce preparation’ from ‘workforce training’ and presumes that immigrant ESL and adult basic education programs include the workforce preparation skills as an outcome of participation. Under WIOA, workforce preparation is defined here as ‘soft’ or work readiness skills or competencies for successful participation in the workforce, but not traditional CTE or technical skills.

AB86 requires that EL Civics Education be provided in all ABE, ASE, and ESL programs. This includes distributing information on the Federal, state and local government, the three branches of government, the importance of civic engagement, and registering to vote.

Functional literacy, numeracy and English language skills are significant to another category of WIOA programming called Integrated Education and Training (IET). IET is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific

occupation or occupational cluster for educational and career advancement.² IET represents a wide spectrum of services to build foundational, employability, and occupational skills simultaneously, recognizing that the barriers to workforce success for adult learners include basic math and English, spoken English, and work readiness along with technical or occupational competencies. IET is both a significant emphasis of WIOA and is reportable under Title II.

K12 Adult Education: Assessing ABE, ASE, and ESL

The National Reporting System

The WIOA Title II AEFLA defines the ESL, literacy, and math assessment requirements for Title II funded agencies. In California, this includes nearly all California K12 adult schools and many community college noncredit programs that offer ABE, ASE, and ESL programs. While agencies that administer Title II funds must report on all the WIOA performance indicators, including workforce outcomes and post-secondary credential attainment, they have specific requirements for measurable skills gains in ESL, literacy, and math which must be assessed using standardized pre- and post-assessments to report educational gains to the National Reporting System (NRS) operated by the US Department of Education (DOE).³

The NRS was implemented by DOE in 2000 to provide an accountability and reporting system for federally-supported adult education programs. The framework for the NRS and its competency maps were developed through national convenings of adult education directors and stakeholders by the DOE's Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL). NRS policy describes which assessments local programs can use, training requirements for assessments and assessment administration, and reporting requirements.⁴

Educational Functioning Levels

The NRS measures skills gains in ESL, literacy, and numeracy as educational functioning levels (EFL) based on students' abilities to perform tasks in specific content areas. The NRS framework defines four EFLs for ABE, two for ASE, and six for ESL.

² WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy. www.wa.gov/esd/1stop/docs/wioa/WIOA_Title_II.doc

³ National Reporting System for Adult Education (2016); *State Assessment Policy Guidance*. http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/Assessment_Policy_Guidance.508_updatedJuly2016.pdf.

⁴ Division of Adult Education and Literacy, US Department of Education (2016); *Measures and Methods for the National Reporting System for Adult Education*. http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/NRS%20Implementation%20Guidelines%20rev_to_February%202016.pdf.

Adult Basic Education	Adult Secondary Education	ESL
Beginning ABE Literacy	Low Adult Secondary Educ.	Beginning ESL Literacy
Beginning Basic Education	High Adult Secondary Educ.	Low Beginning ESL
Low Intermediate Basic Educ.		High Beginning ESL
High Intermediate Basic Educ.		Low Intermediate ESL
		High Intermediate ESL
		Advanced ESL

Each EFL in ABE, ASE, and ESL includes three distinct competency areas that must be incorporated in assessments for advancement to the next EFL, including:

- ABE and ASE: **1. Basic Reading and Writing, 2. Numeracy Skills, 3. Workplace Skills**
- ESL: **1. Listening and Speaking, 2. Basic Reading and Writing, 3. Functional and Workplace Skills.**

For example, the competency descriptors for the EFL for Beginning Basic Education are:⁵

Basic Reading & Writing	Numeracy Skills	Functional & Workplace Skills
Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety, but individual shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).	Individual can count, add, and subtract three digit numbers, can perform multiplication through 12, can identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.	Individual is able to read simple directions, signs, and maps, fill out simple forms requiring basic personal information, write phone messages, and make simple changes. There is minimal knowledge of and experience with using computers and related technology. The individual can handle basic entry-level jobs that require minimal literacy skills; can recognize very short, explicit, pictorial texts (e.g., understands logos related to worker safety before using a piece of machinery); and can read want ads and complete simple job applications.

Assessment Practices

All participants in WIOA AEFLA Title II funded programs are considered to be in an educational program leading to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and are subject to the WIOA measurable skills gain indicator. For ABE, ASE, and ESL programs, this requires that the participant demonstrate achievement of at least one EFL gain in one of three ways:

⁵ www.nrsweb.org/docs/efl_descriptors.doc

- Comparison of skill gains through pre- and post-testing of participants using a National Reporting System-approved testing instrument.
- For participants in state-recognized adult high school programs, states may report educational gain through the awarding of credits or Carnegie units.
- A student who exits a program below the post-secondary level and enrolls in post-secondary education and training.⁶

Note that the application of the Carnegie unit applies explicitly and only to adult high school programs and that there has historically been limited ability to track transition of K12 adult students into post-secondary. As a result, and because the vast majority of K12 adult education students are ABE and ESL students, nearly all functional skill level gains in adult education are reported through pre- and post-testing using standardized assessments.

The NRS has approved a limited number of standardized assessment instruments which have been normed and benchmarked to the NRS EFLs such as the Comprehensive Adult School Assessment System (CASAS), the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), or BEST Literacy. Not all assessments can be used for every level or program area. Under WIOA, states must develop and submit an annual assessment policy for adult education. The policies must specify which assessments from the NRS-approved lists that the state will use for adult education, administrative policies for assessment, and reporting requirements.

Individuals in Title II programs who participate in 12 hours of instruction become participants for the purposes of WIOA reporting and become subject to the pre- and post-testing requirements. The interval between pre- and post- tests is subject to the discretion of the state or the local agency, but 80-100 hours of instruction is not uncommon.

California Adult Education and AEBG

CASAS is the designated assessment instrument for WIOA Title II programs in California and is used for measuring skills gains for all ABE, ASE, and ESL students in K12 adult education and for Title II-funded students in community college noncredit programs. In California, the EFLs are tied to payment points for Title II funds, such that providers receive additional funding for each student who improves one or more levels.

Implementation of a common, standardized instrument allows providers to document student progress in the largely open-entry-open-exit context of adult education, as opposed to credit coursework, which tracks successful course completion. Because CASAS

⁶ US Department of Education: Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (2016); "Program Memorandum OCTAE 17-2: Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV Core Programs.
<http://www.nrsweb.org/foundations/Program%20Memorandum%2017-2%20OCTAE.pdf>

also administers the TE reporting tool, it creates efficiencies in automating the reporting of testing data, along with core demographics and other local indicators of student progress that must be updated quarterly and annually.

The CASAS NRS approved assessments for ABE, ASE, and ESL are designed for measurable skills gain that assess underlying basic skills from pre-literacy through postsecondary readiness. Additionally CASAS offers COAPPS (Civic Education and Additional Assessment Plans) assessments which are CA approved for assessing the functional skills related to civic education and workforce training. These are not NRS approved but state approved for documenting student outcomes for EL Civics and are also part of the WIOA II performance based funding in CA. Finally, CASAS also offers the POWER (Providing Options for the Workplace, Education, and Rehabilitation) series is targeted toward adults with intellectual disabilities who do not perform well on paper-and-pencil assessments which are widely used by K12 Adult providers in California.

Community College: Assessing ABE, ASE, and ESL

In 2012, the California community colleges system received funding from the state to develop an assessment process that would be used by all colleges to evaluate whether students had the English and math skills necessary to enroll in college-level coursework. The Common Assessment Initiative (CAI) is creating a system that will:

- Contribute to student success.
- Reduce unnecessary remediation.
- Align to state legislation.
- Provide statewide efficiencies for the academic placement process within and between California colleges.⁷

CAI has supported two, complementary strategies regarding assessing college readiness: testing and multiple measures.

Common Assessment Test

After reviewing the literature about assessment and placement testing systems, the CAI steering committee recommended that an adaptive test be developed that is grounded in the competencies taught in colleges' developmental sequences. Teams of faculty in ESL, English, and math were convened to identify the core skills that are taught across colleges, and the sequence of foundational skills that prepare students for success in gateway courses. This resulted in the development of competency maps that document the continuum of pre-collegiate skills, knowledge, and abilities from the lowest competency

⁷ <https://www.cccassess.org/about/overview>

addressed by community colleges to the highest, with key intermediate milestones identified along the way.⁸

The maps leveraged a number of assessment frameworks used in other educational contexts, including the Common Core grade-level standards, the Smarter Balanced assessment, the CB21 rubric that establishes core competencies for each level below college-level, standards created for the California Community Colleges ESL Placement Test Development Project, the California Noncredit and Adult Education English as a Second Language Model Curriculum Standards and Assessment Guide, the NRS EFLs, and intersegmental faculty standards for college readiness.

Colleges are expected to map the assessment competencies against their local curricula to determine which skills on the continuum serve as pre-requisites for each of their basic skills and gateway courses. These maps can then be used to determine which course best matches the skills that a student demonstrated on the test, to inform placement decisions and to clarify for faculty the most common skills that students need to master.⁹

Under this model, placement is completely aligned with local curricula and placement policies, meaning that a student with the same competencies might be placed at different levels-below and advised to take different courses at various colleges.

The test was designed to be used when a student first enrolls in college, to support initial placement into ESL, English, and math—it is not intended for pre- and post-testing. Therefore, the reporting associated with the test provides information as used in the placement process and high-level summary data for faculty. Assessment results are not provided in a manner that would allow for comparison between testing intervals.

At this point, the test and the reporting platform have been developed, but the system is undergoing validation and is not yet in use.

Multiple Measures

California community colleges are required by Title 5 to assess students' college readiness using more than one assessment measure, which is referred to as "multiple measures." Historically, the implementation of multiple measures was unregulated, with no validation required and colleges pursuing a wide range of practices and policies.¹⁰ Starting

⁸ Nguyen, T. (2016). The Common Assessment Initiative 2014-2015 Evaluation Report. Sacramento: RP Group. <https://www.cccassess.org/documents/all-documents/cai-grant-documents/96-cai-2014-2015-evaluation-report/file>

⁹ <https://www.cccassess.org/documents/all-documents/competency-mapping>

¹⁰ California Community Colleges Academic Senate (2014.) Multiple Measures in Assessment: The Requirements and Challenges of Multiple Measures in the California Community Colleges.

in 2014, the Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP) conducted extensive research and developed a data model that provides a validated approach for analyzing students' K12 grades, course-taking patterns, and prior tests to predict success in college-level coursework. MMAP was integrated into CAI in 2015. More than 60 colleges are participating in MMAP, although some have modified the specific methodology for quantifying students' prior learning—ranging from using self-reported grades and GPAs to integrating noncognitive measures that are evaluated using a variety of assessments.

Preliminary analyses of colleges that have implemented multiple measures show that this approach dramatically increases the number of students who successfully pass gateway courses, while having minimal impact on course success. Multiple measures have also proven to be particularly effective in reducing equity gaps. For example, when MiraCosta College implemented multiple measures in 2016, the percentage of students placed directly into transfer-level English jumped from 62% to 77%. Under the previous model, only 49% of African Americans and 52% of Hispanics were placed above the pre-collegiate level, but after multiple measures were implemented the numbers increased to 63% and 69%, respectively.¹¹

Other Ways of Measuring Skills Gains

The community colleges have put considerable emphasis on students' progression from one pre-collegiate level to the next, as well as passing English and math gateway courses, in their evaluation of student success. This process was made possible by a statewide effort to create a consistent rubric for levels-below college and to work with basic skills faculty to ensure that courses are coded correctly in local data systems.¹²

Progress along the developmental pipeline is examined for the purpose of basic skills funding, using the Basic Skills Progress Tracker, a tool on the Chancellor's Office Data Mart that shows student progression and provides disaggregated data.¹³ Progress from developmental to transfer-level coursework is also featured on the Student Success Scorecard.¹⁴

<http://www.asccc.org/papers/multiple-measures-assessment-requirements-and-challenges-multiple-measures-california>

¹¹ Educational Results Partnership & RP Group (2017). Multiple Measures Assessment Project: The opportunity and adversity of increasing placement accuracy.

http://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/MultipleMeasures/Presentations/RPConference_2017.pdf

¹² www.cccbsi.org/cb21-information

¹³ http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/BasicSkills_Cohort_Tracker.aspx

¹⁴ <http://scorecard.cccco.edu>

Implications for AEBG

Although there has been little direct discussion of how CAI will be applied to noncredit and adult education transitions, there are several opportunities to use the initiative and other basic skills resources to measure skills gains and support adult education students in transitioning to college credit courses.

For example, while the common assessment test may not be appropriate for tracking measurable skills gains, the competency maps associated with the project could be used to determine equivalency with EFLs for ESL, English, and math. This would help to highlight whether there is a gap between the top of adult education offerings and the floor of college offerings, and where overlaps exist between the two systems.

The competencies included in the maps reflect many skills that are well below 8th grade Common Core standards—such as using place value to round numbers and writing one-sentence summaries. For ESL, the competencies extend all the way down to letter recognition. As part of the competency map development process, both adult education and community-based providers reviewed the ESL, English, and math documents and felt that they tracked the critical concepts taught in adult education contexts (with the exception that the maps do not include measures of an English language learner’s literacy levels in their native language). Demonstrated mastery of concepts included in the competency maps could also be used as a multiple measure to allow adult education students to transition directly to the most appropriate college course, without re-testing.

One significant challenge regarding re-testing is the competing regulations regarding test instruments. For WIOA Title II funding, providers are required to use an NRS-approved instrument like CASAS. But the Student Success Act of 2012 requires that community colleges use the common assessment test, if they use any test, to inform placement.¹⁵ Therefore, guidance is needed regarding whether exceptions can be made for noncredit basic skills programs that receive the federal funds.

Implementation of multiple measures has focused on math and English, but the RP Group has conducted an analysis of applying the model to ESL.¹⁶ The study found many challenges. Very few community college ESL students have high school information available, and the most students who were identified as English-language learners in high school do not take ESL in college. Within the colleges, ESL sequences are varied and directed toward different transition point related to credit programs, such as feeding students into the traditional developmental sequence or leading to a transfer-level ESL course.

¹⁵ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120SB1456

¹⁶ Willett, T. (2017). English as a Second Language Multiple Measure Development. Sacramento: RP Group.

The researchers proposed that in order to construct a multiple measures analytical model similar to the one developed for English and math using K12 data, other variables should be included such as test scores, the number of years studying English, or the highest level of prior formal education. Given that self-reported data by students appears to be sufficiently accurate where administrative data from educational institutions are not available, colleges could use these types of variables to support the placement of adult education students when they enter community college.¹⁷

¹⁷ Shaw, E. & Mattern, K. (2009). Examining the Accuracy of Self-Reported High School Grade Point Average. New York: The College Board.



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