

English Language Acquisition (ELA) Required Testing

All customers must be pre- and post-tested in order to document educational gains. Educational gains are advancement from one functioning level to the next. The three state-approved ELA tests are the BEST Literacy™, BEST Plus™ 2.0, and the CASAS Life and Work Reading.

The BEST (Basic English Skills Test) Literacy is a reading and writing test based on daily tasks such as reading clothing and food labels, addressing an envelope, and filling out a form. This assessment is appropriate for levels 1-5 of ESL (English as a Second Language), has a maximum time for administration of 60 minutes, and is administered individually or to a group. Forms B, C or D are the only approved Best Literacy Assessments in Illinois. If a customer lacks the literacy skills to be assessed with the BEST Literacy (for example, a customer is not literate in his or her native language), then programs may administer the BEST Literacy Screener. If the customer is not successful on the screener, a zero will be recorded in the data collection system as a pre-test score. The screener should only be administered once upon enrollment in the adult education program. Subsequent post-testing should use the BEST Literacy itself, not the screener.

The following approved CASAS Life and Work Reading tests are administered to assess reading in life and work contexts through a multiple-choice format: 27R, 28R, 81R, 82R, 81RX, 82RX, 83R, 84R, 185R, 186R, 187R, and 188R. Level selection for customers should comply with test publisher guidelines. The tests may be administered in a paper-and-pencil format or an electronic format (the eTest). For the paper-and-pencil format, the 25-minute Appraisal identifies the correct pre-test level and form to give initially, while the pre-test score identifies the correct post-test to administer. The eTest moves seamlessly from a computer-adaptive locator into the correct pre-test level and form and identifies the correct post-test to administer. Both the paper and eTest formats take approximately 60 minutes to administer.

The BEST Plus 2.0 is only administered in Illinois as a face-to-face computer adaptive interview. The customer responds to questions asked by the tester based on computer prompts. The items reflect everyday American life at home, at work, and in the community.

In compliance with WIOA and Illinois Policy, ELA customers must be pre-tested using one of the state-approved ELA tests. Customers must be post-tested with a different form of the test to document progress in the ELA course except for BEST Plus 2.0 which is a computer adaptive test that changes with each administration.

Customer scores used for placement and National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) purposes must be entered in the data collection system. Answer sheets and scores from any of the tests must be kept in each customer's file.

To ensure reliability and validity of BEST Plus 2.0, test administrators are required to attend the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Training Workshop. All administrators are required to attend a 6-contact hour training workshop conducted by a certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainer before they may begin testing.

ELA Tests and NRS Levels

Summary of ELA Testing

NRS Levels	BEST Plus**	BEST Literacy*	CASAS**
Beginning Literacy ESL Level 1	361 and Below	0 – 20	180 and Below
Low Beginning ESL Level 2	362 – 427	21 – 52	181-190
High Beginning ESL Level 3	428 – 452	53 – 63	191-200
Low Intermediate ESL Level 4	453 – 484	64 – 67	201-210
High Intermediate ESL Level 5	485 – 524	68 – 75	211-220^
Advanced ESL Level 6	525 – 564	76 – 78	221-235^
Exit Criteria	Above 565	NA	Above 235

The BEST Plus 2.0 is a computer adaptive test. The test changes with each administration and, subsequently, there is no form designation.

Customers should be pre- and post-tested with the same assessment. Exceptions include the following:

1. If the customer's pre-test score on the BEST Literacy places them in the Advanced Level and additional ELA services are needed, a second ELA assessment should be given. It is not necessary to post-test on the BEST Literacy as the second assessment will be used for customer placement.
2. If the customer's pre-test score on either the CASAS or BEST Plus 2.0 places them in the Exit Criteria range, they should either be administered another ELA assessment that reflects the need for ELA services or be transitioned to ABE, ASE, or post-secondary as appropriate. Post-testing on one of these assessments when the pre-test revealed the Exit Criteria range is not necessary as the second assessment will reflect the customer's level.
3. If the customer's pre-test on the BEST Literacy or CASAS reveals ELA Advanced and a second ELA assessment's pre-test reveals the Exit Criteria range, the customer should be transitioned to ABE, ASE, or post-secondary as appropriate.