

We have been receiving some questions from the field that we believe are of interest to all programs. These are some great questions that address issues everyone is dealing with. This is a compilation of those questions and answers.

Carrying Student Hours Year-to-Year

There has been some confusion because instructional hours used to reset every year, and a student had to get 60 hours each year before he could post test.

The decision to stop resetting instructional hours at the beginning of each program year was just made this year, so the old FAQ is no longer correct. We have pulled the FAQ document from the Help page and will be reposting it with edits soon. The reason behind this change for us was that the feds cracked down harder on testing students with less than 60 hours of instruction and it became clear that there were a lot of students who would never be able to post test unless their hours accumulated across multiple program years. Many of the NRS guidelines are purposely vague and it is left to each state to interpret the details. We decided to loosen up our interpretation and stop resetting hours at the beginning of each program year. We are confident that we are still operating within the guidelines.

Giving the instructional year pretest does not reset the 60 hour clock, right?

There is no need to reset the 60 hour clock. Once the student has gotten the initial 60 hours and post-tested in the PAI, you are free to administer subsequent post tests as dictated by the student's educational needs and your professional judgment. You are also responsible to follow TABE testing guidelines as to form and frequency.

It seems that we are asking the students to take a test that does not have any value to them other than checking progress.

Checking progress is one of the primary reasons for testing, so testing has value when student accumulated hours, TABE rules, and student progress are taking into consideration.

The Instructional Year

Instructional year has also caused a lot of angst. It might be useful for you to have some background.

The instructional year concept was introduced because, at the time, our state policy allowed students to post test with less than 60 hours of instruction **if they**

had completed a continuous term of instruction, made significant gain, or were about to exit the program. We needed to define a continuous term of instruction in our state policy, so we came up with the concept of instructional year for that purpose. It provided a sort of loophole where students could be tested with less than 60 hours of instruction. After our state policy was approved by the feds, they came back and said, even with an instructional year, you must **have a minimum of 50 hours before we can count the test at the end of the instructional year, and you can no longer test prior to 60 hours if a student is about to exit the program or made significant gains.** That was a huge disappointment, but by then Instructional Year was a part of our approved policy and going back to rewrite the policy wasn't a good option. Asking the feds to approve a revised policy would have opened up everything we do to further scrutiny at a time when they were tightening up the reins.

We also found that, from a programming point of view, the instructional year had some other advantages. Up to that point, pre and post testing was all over the map and it was nearly impossible to accurately calculate student gains. Programs were very inconsistent in their testing. There were so many different scenarios that we felt like we had to be mind readers to get it right. Putting pretests on a yearly schedule made a huge difference in our ability to accurately count education gains.

The PAI

Reporting gains in the PAI

Question from the field: After we achieve a gain in the starting PAI, we are accountable from that point forward for whatever the PAI is on July 1. Is this what you were saying?

Answer: That is true to a point. That accountability only extends to the NRS annual reporting. You are also accountable to the student to help them achieve as much as possible in all areas. Once they have a gain in the original PAI, you are free to provide whatever instruction best meets the needs of your student.

Changing the PAI

Question from the field: We are not allowed to change the PAI based upon how the student scores on his instructional year pretests, right?

Answer: You are allowed to change the PAI once the student makes a gain in the original YPAI.

PAI Scenario Question: What if a student enters our program and is identified with a PAI in Language. She stops out for a couple of months and takes the language portions of her GED and passes. She comes back in the same Instructional Year and now only

wants to work on Math because that is what she needs to complete her GED. Is it right that we cannot change her PAI to Math? Are we still accountable for the Language PAI even though she does not want or need any further instruction in that area?

Answer: Yes, you are accountable for the Language PAI until a gain has been made. That is not to say that you can't instruct the student in Math, but it would be a good idea to try to get her to take the Language posttest so she can show the gain. Of course, there are other variables to your question. Gain is measured by program year, and instructional years do not always line up to program years. So, depending on the date of enrollment, if she shows a gain in language this year, this student might be able to show a gain in math in the upcoming program year if her attendance will span July 1. Also, if her original EFL was ASE High and she passes the GED, then she will be counted as having made an ed gain, AND will get credit for GED as a goal completion.

Monitoring EFL

Question from the field: When I attempted to open up the reports on students with no EFL or missing race/ethnicity data I had to select a program to open them with. I tried Adobe Reader and that didn't work so then I tried Windows Wordpad application and I got the names along with what looks like code.

Answer: This does not seem to be an issue for most users – I wonder if it is a browser setting on your computer? For most of us, the report just opens in Excel with no problem.

Question from the field: I have a few students who don't have an EFL because they weren't tested - they are ESL students and were here and gone quickly and we just missed testing them. I am assuming that is why Tables 1-4 don't all have the same total. What do I need to do to reconcile those?

Answer: Nothing, we are removing those students from the counts through the code.

Question from the field: When a student takes their instructional year test, does that reset their EFL? Here is an example: We have a student whose PAI is Language. Last year she was post tested and achieved an EFL of ABE Intermediate High (546). I would assume that this was what it was on July 1 of this year (new program year). She took her Instructional Year test and her Language EFL was ABE Beginning Basic (483). When the instructor works with this student are they responsible to get the gain based on the score at July 1 or based on the score from the Instructional Year test?

Answer: Retesting will not reset the student's starting EFL, although it might change his current EFL. The instructor is responsible to get the gain based on the score at July 1. I

can see where this looks difficult for this student, based on her current EFL, which is considerably lower than her EFL on July 1. In this case, I would question the validity of her current Language pretest. You instructed her in Language for over a year and her two prior language tests scored much higher than her current language test.

Education Gains for ASE High

Question from the field: It is my understanding that we are not required to post test students who are ASE High because there is no way to show a gain unless they have the GED as a goal and pass it. My question is, if that is the case why are the students who I served who are ASE High counted in the percentage of students who complete a level on Table 4?

The NRS guidelines specify that the total of column B on Table 4 must match the total on Column N on Table 1. If we omitted the ASE High students from Table 4, the totals would not match. Since it is possible to show a gain from ASE High with a GED completion, we are reporting on how many students did just that. These students are counted as having a gain on Table 4 and as having a goal completion on Table 5.