

MABLE FAQ

Assessment Only Students

QUESTION: How long will the assessment only students be on the records?

ANSWER: Assessment only students will stay in the database as long as any other student. At this time there are no plans to remove any student records. You will be able to view assessment only student records for those students who are currently enrolled in your site or have been enrolled and exited in the current program year. (Or up until October of the following program year)

QUESTION: If an assessment only student takes a GED test and passes it, can that achievement be listed?

ANSWER: If the student takes a GED test, has signed the SSN waiver, and has been enrolled in your site during the program year, you should be able to view his GED records on the Achievement page. Those scores will not be used in any NRS reporting because Assessment Only students are not enrolled in your ABE program. They should not be receiving instruction or have recorded attendance other than the time spent testing. If the student has received instruction at your site, you should change the status from Assessment Only to Enrolled in ABE so that any gains or goals can be counted for your program.

Data Matching

QUESTION: I had two students who went on to college, but they were not counted as having made the goal in the data match. How is that possible?

ANSWER: We send a list of student names and SSN to the university system, and to the community colleges and tribal colleges. They match those students with their databases and let us know which students registered in those institutions. If the last name or SSN in MABLE do not match what the college has in their records, there would be no match. This could be because of a data entry error on either side, or because the student reported the information differently to each entity.

Another possible reason would be that the student does not have a signed waiver on file. We cannot send student information out for data match unless the student has signed a waiver.

One more thing to look at would be the year of the student's goal. Perhaps he has the goal for this year, but we are matching on the prior program year goals. In order to have achieved the goal, the student must have a separation date during the program year being reported.

Educational Functional Level (EFL) Gain

See Tracking and Assessment Document, April 2011

QUESTION: Does the instructional year pretest count as a gain for the program year?

ANSWER: If the student had the minimum hours of instruction for his/her EFL when the instructional year pretest was taken, any gains in the PAI would count for NRS reporting.

QUESTION: Are we accountable for Program Year Hours? What hours are being reported to the NRS - Program or Instructional? Are we responsible for an EFL gain of a student who enters in April and will not have the minimum number of hours by 6/30?

ANSWER: This has not changed from past practice. Table 4 reports total hours in the program year by functioning level. As always, a student who enters during the program year and has at least 12 hours of instruction will be counted on the NRS tables. If he has not post tested, he will be counted as staying at the same level on Table 4. He will not be counted on Table 4B since that only counts students who have post tested. There will always be students who enroll too late in the program year to have time to post test by June 30. That would be true of all programs in all states, so we are all on even footing.

Educational Functional Level (EFL) Monitoring

QUESTION: 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 help the student 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: 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. 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?

ANSWER: Since it is possible to show a level gain from ASE High with a GED completion, we are reporting on how many students did just that. 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.

These students are counted as having a level gain on Table 4 AND as having a goal completion on Table 5.

Exiting Students

QUESTION: When do I exit a student?

ANSWER: For all measures, exit quarter is the quarter when the learner completes instruction or has not received instruction for 90 days and has no instruction scheduled.

QUESTION: I had a student leave our program and then return a month later because his plans had changed. Mable won't let me create a new enrollment record for him. Is this a bug?

ANSWER: If a student separates and then returns to continue instruction within 90 days of his/her last attendance, the program should just remove the separation date from his enrollment record. MABLE will not allow you to create a new enrollment record in this case.

GED

QUESTION: If a student with a goal of attaining a GED accrues 12 hours in a program year, but does not attain the goal until the next program year, in which there is less than twelve hours accrued, what is the cutoff date for counting the GED in the original program year?

ANSWER: If the student has not exited by the end of the program year in which he has 12 or more hours, the GED will not be counted in any case.
If a student has the goal of attaining a GED and separates from the program by the end of the program year in which he has 12 or more hours, the credential must be dated no later than October 15th of the subsequent program year for it to be captured.

QUESTION: I wanted to check if my student had passed the GED test, but when I went to his Achievement page, there is no Update button. Why not?

ANSWER: If the student has not signed a waiver for release of SSN, there will be no Update button on that student's record. Check the Core Data page to see if the SSN Waiver box has been checked. You must confirm that the student's file contains a signed waiver form before checking the box.

QUESTION: Do the instructional hour requirements apply to taking the GED?

ANSWER: No, that is a TABE/BEST testing requirement.

Instructional Year

Instructional year has 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 the minimum number of 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 to support that rule, 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 the minimum number of 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 number of before we can count the test at the end of the instructional year, and you can no longer test prior to**

the minimum even if a student is about to exit the program or has 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.

QUESTION: It appears that the enrollment date and the instructional year will differ. Is this true?

ANSWER: For a student who has just one enrollment date, the enrollment date and instructional year will be just the same. For students who have been in and out of the program or who have enrolled in more than one site, MABLE had to examine their various enrollment and separation dates to determine which one to choose. The instructional year will always match the enrollment date that MABLE selected, based on a series of logical rules. For example:

- The student enrolls for the first time – his instructional year starts on the day he enrolls.
- The student leaves and comes back after 90 or more days.
 - If he comes back and his original instructional year is still in effect he continues the same instructional year, based on his original enrollment date.

QUESTION: How do we know what the student's instructional year is? Is there a report that can be made that shows that information?

ANSWER: That report is available on the Site Summary page. The second section on that page lists students who are ready for a test. Click the link at the top of that section for a spreadsheet of all students at your site. The spreadsheet lists instructional year start date, date of last assessment and total instructional hours.

QUESTION: I'm confused by how many hours my students have accumulated. I thought instructional hours started over at zero at the beginning of the program year.

ANSWER: The decision to stop resetting instructional hours at the beginning of each program year was just made for the 2010-2011 program year. 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.

Primary Area of Instruction (PAI)

QUESTION: Why would MABLE ask for a new PAI when the student didn't make a gain in the last one?

ANSWER: After much discussion on this issue, we have realized that it is not a good idea to allow the PAI to change at the beginning of the instructional year unless the student has made a gain in his original PAI. The only time you will be allowed to select a new PAI is when the student makes a gain on the starting PAI.

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QUESTION: Once a student is ASE High across the board (either came in ASE H or has post tested), MABLE should no longer request a PAI. Is there a default setting?

ANSWER: Even though the student is at ASE High and will not show a gain from TABE testing, you should always choose a PAI so that it is clear to all instructors what the student's focus is. MABLE has been programmed with the business rule that a student must have a PAI, and there is no plan to modify that for this exception. It is understood that achieving the GED is the education gain marker for ASE high.

QUESTION: I am running into students who have post tested and made gains, and now their tests are expiring. If a student has post tested and made gains and their tests have expired, but they are exiting the program, can we just exit them without a PAI being selected?

ANSWER: There should be no reason to choose a PAI for a student who is exiting the program. However, for a continuing student, you must choose a PAI by June 30 so that he has a starting PAI for the next program year. If a student exits with no PAI, and then returns after July 1 of the next program year, Mable may not allow you to select a new PAI that was effective as of July 1. You may need to send a change request form to OPI to set the new PAI as of July 1.

QUESTION: How do I change the PAI if I accidentally pick the wrong one?

ANSWER: You will have to contact OPI to change it for you using a student change request form. We are glad to do that for you.

QUESTION: Are we accountable for the PAI that a student has on July 1, no matter what?

ANSWER: The student must show a gain in his starting PAI in order to be counted as having made a gain for NRS reporting. That accountability only extends to the NRS annual reporting. You are also accountable to the students 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. The student cannot show a gain for NRS reporting in more than one PAI per program year.

QUESTION: 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 PAI. It would be to your disadvantage to change it unless a gain had been made. NRS is only allowing us to report on gains made to the original PAI.

QUESTION: 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.

Race/Ethnicity Reporting Change starting in 2010-2011

Federal reporting requirements regarding race/ethnicity have changed starting with the 2010-2011 program year. Students must answer a 2-part question regarding race and ethnicity; students may now be reported as having more than one race. There is no way for us to convert the old race data to the new form for any students since more information is required than we have ever collected.

For every student who was enrolled in your program prior to July 1, 2010, and whose enrollment has continued past that date, you must go to that student's record and answer the race/ethnicity questions on the Core Data page. Remember to press the Save button once you answer the questions.

Reports

QUESTION: Can you please tell me if a report is being developed to tell us who has expired test? This is really a problem when it comes to posttesting simply because we are not notified when the tests expire so when they are eligible for a posttest we cannot posttest them.

ANSWER: The Site Summary page lists students who are in the 30-day window before the end of their instructional year. It also shows how many days are left in each student's instructional year, and tells you which students have enough hours to post test and which students are missing pretests. This report is available to export to Excel so you can filter and sort to view various groups of students.

Student Summary Page

QUESTION: Why can't I look at the information for past students?

ANSWER: You can only look at students who are currently enrolled in your site. When a student separates from your site, you can continue to view his record until October of the following program year. This allows you time to do any cleanup of data or review of student information.

QUESTION: If a student has a summary button, does that mean that they are currently enrolled even if they aren't here?

ANSWER: When you find the student using the student locator, if there is a summary button for a student it means he is either currently enrolled or has been enrolled in your site this program year. You can continue to view a previously enrolled student's record until October of the next program year.

QUESTION: On a student's summary page, MABLE states a student's attendance records are locked. Records may be locked, but attendance is not. Hours may be reported on Attendance by Instructor page, is this correct?

ANSWER: We have discovered this as well. Locking attendance until a student has a PAI selected is something we did on the student summary page to trigger data entry people to select a PAI. We can't lock attendance entry on the other attendance pages.

QUESTION: Sometimes I don't understand the message MABLE is giving me about my student or why certain items on his student summary page are locked. Can you give me some pointers?

ANSWER: Here is a checklist of items to look for that might be helpful:

- Does the student have 3 locators? A TABE student must have all 3 locators as part of his/her record.
- Does the student have a pretest in each area, dated on or since the first day of his instructional year? Note: If you post tested him in the 30 days prior to the end of his instructional year, you can use that post test as one of his new pretests, but you must re-enter it as a pretest - MABLE won't recognize it otherwise. If you enter the post test as a pretest, you must also administer the two remaining pretests.
- Does the student have a PAI selected? If he has all of his pretests and 12 or more hours of attendance, you must select a PAI before you can continue entering attendance data.
- If the student is an ESL student, was his last BEST Plus score 541 or higher? If so, he must be tested using the TABE. That would include 3 Locators and 3 pretests.
- Does the student have at least the minimum hours of instruction for his EFL? MABLE will not allow you to enter a new assessment if the student has less than the minimum required.

Testing

Post Testing Hours Requirement Starting April 2011

- **ABE** students can post test after **40** hours of instruction;
- **ASE** students can post test after **30** hours of instruction;

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- **ESL** students can post test after **60** hours of instruction (or 50 hours if exceptional progress has been made and upon director's approval - see policy for details).

Pre-Testing/Locator

QUESTION: Are all students required to pretest at the beginning of each instructional year?

ANSWER: Yes, a new set of pretests are required each instructional year.

QUESTION: Do students need to have three locators at the beginning of each instructional year?

ANSWER: All students need three locators at the beginning of their first instructional term. After the first instructional term, locators are optional, but the pretests are required. All students are required to have one set of locaters on file.

QUESTION: My student located at the L level in Language, but there is no Language pretest for that level. Mable is insisting that the student needs 3 pretests. What do I do?

ANSWER: You should enter a Language pretest with a score of 999, even though the student didn't take a test. This will fool MABLE into allowing you to move forward with this student.

Post testing

QUESTION: A student enters our program. We work with them and then post test after 60 hours. They achieve High ASE in reading, language and math. They have finished their GED and are now prepping for college. They reach their Instructional Year date and MABLE is telling us we need a test so it can be entered as the new Instructional Year pre-test. Can we choose not to give them the test at this time (*maybe wait a couple months when they are ready to move on to college*) because they are already at High ASE?

ANSWER: WIA funds can be used for services to students who have obtained a diploma or credential, as long as that student, when assessed receives a TABE score below the 12.9 level (not to exceed 12.9) Therefore, you will need to pretest the student to determine his/her current functioning level at the beginning of his/her instructional year. This is not optional in MABLE. MABLE will not allow you to continue adding attendance for a student who is missing Pretests after 12 hours of instruction in the new instructional year.

Remember that funds are to be used first for those students most in need, typically the lower level ABE student. WIA funds should not be used to supplant existing funds for transition programs. (Ronna Spacone, U.S. Department of Education, Education Program Specialist. NIFL Transition posting March 2, 2010)

QUESTION: What level of tests can I be giving?

ANSWER: Pretests for new students should be at the locator level. If a student scores at the bottom of the score range on a locator, you may choose to use the next lower level for the pretest. Students may post test at the same or one level higher than their last test.

QUESTION: Do all students need to be post tested at the end of their term of instruction?

ANSWER: There is no requirement that students be post tested at the end of their term of instruction.

QUESTION: Do all students need to be post tested when their name appears on the list on the Site Summary page?

ANSWER: Students can be tested throughout the year once they have reached at least the minimum number of hours of instructional time for their EFL. Even though the student's name comes up on the list as eligible to post test, there is no requirement that he/she must post test. The decision to post test should be based on professional judgment regarding the student's progress. If it is getting close to the end of the program year (June 30) and you believe the student has made gains, it would be to the program's benefit to test the student so that the gain can be captured.

Post testing must follow TABE rules.

All tests given within a term of instruction will expire at the end of that term.

QUESTION: So we are not supposed to pay any attention to hours since last assessment for retest purposes?

ANSWER: That is a decision for you to make within your program. You must adhere to the TABE and BEST testing policies, but the NRS is not imposing any additional restrictions on testing, once the student has reached the minimum number of hours of instruction.

QUESTION: Please explain the 30 day window.

ANSWER: During the last 30 days of the student's instructional year, any post tests you give can be re-entered as pretests for the new instructional year. You will have to do the data entry twice, once as a post test and again as a pretest dated on or after the first day of the new instructional year.

Also during these 30 days, an ESL student with 50-59 hours of instruction can post test without the director having to provide additional documentation that the student has made exceptional gains.

QUESTION: Is it true that although you can post-test them within their 30-day window before expiration, you will have to pre-test them again within the month?

ANSWER: Any post tests given within that 30 day window can be entered as pretests for the new instructional year. You will only have to pretest in any area where there was no post test in the last 30 days.

QUESTION: Is it to the Program's advantage to test students within the student's instructional year?

ANSWER: Not necessarily, since gains are counted on the program year, not the instructional year.

QUESTION: Can we only enter a TABE post test in the Primary Area of Instruction (PAI)?

ANSWER: It is acceptable to only post test in the PAI, if that is what you prefer. You can post test in all three areas if you choose. Gains can only be made in the PAI for NRS reporting, but testing in other areas gives the instructor valuable information about the student's progress. If you do post test in all areas, you must enter all post test data into MABLE.

QUESTION: What form of the test do I need to use for post testing or subsequent pretests?

ANSWER: TABE rules specify that test forms should be given alternately, so it would depend on the previous test. The TABE user's guide recommends a minimum of six months between testing in the same content area on the same form to avoid the "practice effect." There is no specific time frame for testing again on an alternate form after the first test; remediation should occur between testing.