

# Montana Adult Basic and Literacy Education Student Information System Guidelines



Montana  
**Office of Public Instruction**  
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)

The Montana Adult Basic and Literacy (MABLE) student information system was updated in 2009 to better serve students and align more closely with the approved assessment policy. There has been a diligent effort to capture all gains and eliminate questions that have been raised over time regarding MABLE. However, for various reasons there will always be students whose records are outside the norm and will not be counted the way you want, or there may be students who will be counted when this shouldn't be the case. This will apply to a very small percentage of students. Due to a small staff and limited resources, the OPI will not adjust individual records to accommodate discrepancies; this will guarantee consistency across programs.

However during the 2009-2010 program year, it is understood that there will be a need for manual adjustments in MABLE. All requests for modifications to existing records must be submitted to the Office of Public Instruction on the MABLE Technical Assistance form. All forms will be tracked and archived.

## **Student's Instructional Year**

An instructional year starts on each student's enrollment date.

- For students with multiple open enrollments, an instructional year will be based upon the oldest open enrollment.
- For students who separate during an instructional year and return during that same instructional year, the instructional year that was in effect at the time of separation will be used.
- For students that separate and return after an instructional year has passed, a new enrollment must be created.

## **Attendance**

Students must be pretested within the first 12 hours of attendance. Students must have 60 instructional hours prior to being post tested.

The student summary page includes individual student's hours of attendance in their instructional year, hours of attendance in the program year, and hours since their last

assessment The hours since the last assessment start the day after an assessment; this information is added to help guide instruction.

### **Continuous Term of Instruction**

Each student's term of instruction is unique. It begins at the date of enrollment and concludes one year from the date of enrollment. At the end of one continuous term of instruction all TABE tests taken during the term will be expired. However, if a student post tests within 30 days prior to the end of the continuous term of instruction, test scores may be reentered as pretests for the new instructional year. Students may post test within 30 days of the end of their continuous term of instruction, even if they have not completed the minimum number of hours of instruction.

### **Expired Tests**

All tests expire at the end of an instructional year in order to allow the Primary Area of Instruction (PAI) selection as the student progresses.

### **Instructional Activity**

Instructional activity includes time in intake, goal setting, and assessment classes. All instructional activity hours starting on the first day of the current instructional year count toward the 60 hours necessary for post testing.

### **An Instructional Year-Pretesting and Selecting a Primary Area of Instruction (PAI)**

In order to begin a student's first instructional year, the student must complete three locators and three pretests, or the BEST Plus test, to establish a baseline for measuring an education gain in the PAI. When pretesting is complete, the PAI must be selected. English as a Second Language (ESL) students will not need to select a PAI; these students are defaulted to a PAI of ESL.

If a student stops out and returns after the end of his/her instructional year, he/she must locate and pretest in all three areas again. If the student returns before the end of his/her most recent instructional year, the student will continue as if he/she had not left. If a student continues to be enrolled from one year to the next, a locator is not required before subsequent pretests.

NRS guidelines require that the PAI must be in the area of the lowest pretest taken. An exception would be in the event a student requests instruction in a specific content area. In this case, the program instructor can declare that the primary area of instruction will be the requested specific content area. Prior to selecting the primary area of instruction based on student preference, it is important to review all three pretests to discuss and

clarify the student's academic needs. This provides an opportunity for the student to make an informed decision that will guide his/her instruction. If the student does not voice a preference, the lowest area of performance must be selected as the PAI. MABLE will automatically calculate to the lowest and suggest instruction in the lowest area.

If a primary area of instruction is not selected following 12 hours of instructional activity and three pretests, a notice will appear on the student control page that a primary area of instruction has not been selected, and further data entry for this student will be blocked until a selection has been made.

If a student has 12 hours of instruction and three pretests have not been administered, MABLE will not allow entry of more attendance records until the pretest scores have been entered.

### **Locator Tests**

Locator tests are required for all new enrollments and reenrollments for students stopped out for a year or longer.

Locator tests must be at least 12 months apart.

If a student locates in language at the L level, create a pretest in language with a score of 999. There is no pretest for level L language.

### **Pretesting In Subsequent Instructional Years**

In an instructional year, students are allowed one pretest in each content area (reading, math, and language). All students must pretest within the first 12 hours of each continuous term of instruction, and a primary area of instruction must be selected. The student's records will be locked to further data entry of attendance records until the three tests are completed and a primary area of instruction is selected.

If a student post tests within 30 days prior to the end of the continuous term of instruction, the post test scores may be reentered as pretests for the new instructional year, or the student may be given three new pretests at the beginning of the new instructional term.

### **Primary Area of Instruction (PAI)**

Students' PAI cannot be changed within their instructional year until they make an education gain in that area. Upon making an education gain in the selected PAI, a new PAI must be selected. The student may choose the same PAI as was selected in the previous instructional year. The PAI needs to be selected very cautiously; as students

moving from one program year to another must show a gain in the PAI as of July 1 before gains in a new PAI can be counted. (NRS requirements) It is in the best interest of the student and the program to maintain the PAI selected prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> until an education gain has been made.

If a student makes a gain in his/her PAI and then makes a gain in another area so that his/her EFL is two or more levels above his/her starting EFL, the additional gain will be reported in NRS.

Student counseling should take place following each post test administration, and at the conclusion of a term of instruction, to discuss PAI and personal goals.

If a student stops out for less than one year, the PAI from when they left is still in effect until a gain is made. At the end of their instructional term the PAI will expire if there are no tests 30 days prior to the end of the term. Post tests given 30 days prior to the end of the term may be re-entered as pretests for the next term.

### **Post testing**

Post testing should take occur after 60 hours of instructional activity. A message will appear on the home page flagging all students that have completed the minimal number of instructional activity hours and who have not been post tested in any area. This message is not tied to the primary area of instruction; it is incumbent upon the program staff to determine which area(s) the student needs to be tested. After the initial 60 hours of instruction, program staff must monitor student progress for ongoing assessments, as no further messages will occur on the home page regarding attendance hours. Total hours for the instructional year, total hours for the program year, and total hours since the last assessment will be tracked on the student summary page.

To measure an educational gain, the posttest must be in the primary area of instruction. Once an educational gain is made in the primary area of instruction, a new primary area of instruction must be selected and will be shown on the student summary page. Note that a student may continue with the same PAI if that is still the lowest tested area.

Posting before 60 hours of instructional activity requires a waiver signed by the program director. All waivers must be saved in the student file. If a post test is entered into MABLE prior to 60 hours, a validation error will appear. Directors must approve the post test and the reason for post testing must be documented in the data system.

Exception to the instruction hour rule:

- With the TABE, the OPI may "except" down to 50 instructional hours. Do not go below 50 hours for the TABE under any circumstances. Tests prior to 50 hours are considered to have no validity whatsoever.

- All exceptions must be predicated on unexpected gains in academic programs.
- Each exception must be approved by the local program director, who will agree to the specific academic reasons for the early test and sign each exception. The state Exception to Instructional Hours Rule Form must be signed and filed with documented evidence.

The OPI will run a validation error report three times per year to monitor post testing outside the 60 hour requirement, and the OPI must include exceptions in the regular monitoring schedule to ensure that no sites are taking advantage of the possibility of except.

"Student preparing to exit the program" is no longer an allowable reason for post testing early. Post testing after one continuous term of instruction is allowable (30 days prior to the end of the instructional year).

### **Retesting**

In some instances a student may be tested more than once to determine progress toward making an education gain. 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 retesting on an alternate form after the first retest; remediation should occur between retesting due to a six-month time frame before retesting on the alternate form. It is incumbent on the program staff to monitor which area(s) the student needs retested.

### **Educational Gains**

For NRS reporting purposes, educational gains are based on the student making a gain on the PAI that he/she had on July 1<sup>st</sup> of the program year. If a student isn't enrolled on July 1, educational gain will be based on the first PAI at enrollment and pretesting.

### **Goal Setting**

Student goals must be selected at the beginning of each program year, regardless of when the student enters the program.

### **An Instructional Cycle**

Test scores are valid for one instructional year. If a student remains in an ABL program longer than one instructional year, a new instructional baseline must be determined by pretesting the student. The primary area of instruction for the next instructional year will

be based on the three most recent pretests. For reporting purposes, the PAI on July 1<sup>st</sup> will be the area in which the education gain must be demonstrated.

Any additional tests given during the year will be considered posttests.

For a student who stops out (original enrollment record has separation date and new enrollment is created) and returns in the same instructional year, test scores are still valid and the student continues where he/she left off (tests, hours, EFL, gains). If a student stops out for a period longer than one instructional year, tests administered in the prior year are no longer valid; locator tests and pretests must be administered again.

### **The Home Page/Site Summary**

The site summary page can help the local program staff monitor student progress and make instructional decisions. The following information will be available:

- A list of students who have not attended for 90 days. These students must be exited.
- A list of enrolled students who are entering the last month of their continuous term of instruction. These students may be post tested, if they have not had a post test within the last six months.
- A list of enrolled students who have 60 hours with no post test. These students may be post tested.
- A list of enrolled students who do not have a goal. A goal should be entered, unless the students' only goal is to make an education gain.

Once the first post test has been administered there will be no further messages on the home page regarding post testing. Instructional hours will be tracked on an information line on each student's summary page.

### **BEST Plus Tests**

Students starting in BEST Plus must remain in BEST Plus until testing higher than 541 on a posttest.

BEST Plus students are allowed one pretest in each instructional year, and the pretest must be given within the first 12 hours of instruction. Students must receive 60 hours of instruction prior to a posttest.

### **Instructional Activity-Hours Included in the Required 60 Hours for Post Testing**

Student instructional activity includes: intake class, assessment class, goal setting class, and formal instruction. Time spent on these activities should be entered in the appropriate classes.

#### Record Hours in Intake Class

##### Intake Activities Include

- Determining client's motivation for enrolling (This is taking time to get to know the person.)
- Discussing rationale for enrolling, possible goals
- Identifying any barriers for participation
- Identifying resources for client
- Gathering student's demographic data

#### Record Hours in Assessment Class

##### Assessment Activities Include

- Administering locator test
- Administering pre-test
- Administering post-test

#### Record Hours in Goal Setting/Counseling Class

##### Goal Setting/Counseling Activities Include

- Discussing results of pretest with client
- Assisting client in selection of long and short-term goals
- Determining when you are going to revisit goals with client
- Revisiting client's goal(s) as scheduled
- All modules and activities from the Montana Career Information System
- PEP talk time

### **Counting Dually Enrolled Students**

Students who are dually enrolled in programs and make an education gain or attain a core goal will be counted as having made a gain on reports for all programs where they have 12 or more hours. The students are reported to the NRS only once.

### **Enrolling Students from Another Program**

Create a new enrollment record. Open the student record, and under the enrollment tab, click the new enrollment button.

## **Technical Assistance**

For technical assistance send the Technical Request form attached to an e-mail addressed to:

Linda Gardner at [ligardner@mt.gov](mailto:ligardner@mt.gov)

Carol Flynn at [cflynn@mt.gov](mailto:cflynn@mt.gov)