



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

ASSESSMENT - BEST PLUS



Let's get to work.

OACES

Office of Adult & Career Education Services
Rochester City School District

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

The Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES), a department of the Rochester City School District, and the Catholic Family Center (CFC) have collaborated to support various community agencies in their efforts to provide services to new Americans.

This guide was partially funded by the New York State Office of New Americans (ONA). ONA supports programs that encourage new Americans to fully participate in New York State civic and economic life by providing training for English Language Students, helping legal permanent residents navigate the path to citizenship, and encouraging entrepreneurship. ONA is taking steps to protect new Americans as they transition to full participation in New York's communities.



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WHAT IS ADULT EDUCATION?

Adult Education is instruction, often at no cost, for adult students who want to improve their employability, education, or English language skills. Adult Education programs offer basic reading, writing, math, and problem-solving classes, English language lessons, employment preparation and training, Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) preparation, and other basic educational services for adult students. Adult Education includes Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) as well as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL / ESL).

Adult Education programs are for adults 16 years of age and older who are not in school, who have academic skills below the 12th grade level, and/or who need help learning English. The goal of Adult Education is to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens.

Adult Education is funded in part by the federal and state governments, with local and community support. Many programs receive grant funding from private and corporate sources. The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) unit oversees Adult Education programs in New York. ACCES works with public schools, community-based organizations, colleges, correctional facilities, and other agencies to provide Adult Education services.

In Rochester, the Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES) is a workforce preparation organization that helps adult students learn the skills they need for success in the workplace and outside the classroom.

With unique focus on the education and employment needs of New York State's adult citizens, several vital interests and goals can be best served through:

- Ensuring that the needs of adults and out-of-school youth are met through efficient and effective access to relevant services, programs, and opportunities offered by the NYSED.
- Encouraging full participation of adults with disabilities.

- Enhancing post-secondary transitions by developing the capacity of individuals to engage in post-secondary education leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Promoting workforce investment through unified collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor and State and local Workforce Investment Boards to assure that individuals have access to a “one-stop” source for a full range of services leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Supporting individuals experiencing poverty and relying on public services to develop their capacity to earn income and develop assets toward greater economic independence.
- Utilizing a more comprehensive and effective representation for adults in coordinating services and program initiatives with New York State agencies such as the Departments of Labor and Health, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Office of Children and Family Services, and the State University of New York (SUNY).

There are multiple literacies addressed by Adult Education.

- Survival Literacy
- Oral/Speaking and Written Literacy
- Cultural/Social and Civic Literacy
- Workplace and Employment Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Financial Literacy
- Technological and Digital/Electronic Literacy
- Geographic Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Environmental Literacy
- Scientific Literacy



The importance of each of these literacies in an individual’s life varies based on specific circumstances. They all, however, have the potential to greatly affect the life of every adult and his/her family.

Literacy begins within the family and is reinforced, whether positively or negatively, in subsequent generations. Adult Education seeks to reinforce, promote, and support literacy to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens and in turn continue the cycle of literacy into the future.

Adult Education provides for the Community in numerous ways:

- Adult Education programs benefit businesses, workers, and job seekers. Businesses encourage Adult Education in order to provide and sustain a highly skilled and specialized workforce a workforce with the skills to perform a variety of tasks or workers with “cross-functional” skills. Workers may receive promotions, gain more power in the job market, or become more valuable employees by enrolling in Adult Education programs.
- Adult Education training facilities often house state-of-the-art equipment such as computers and computer-based training equipment.
- Adult Education programs benefit families. Increased literacy and skills translate to a higher earnings potential for the household. Parents’ literacy levels directly correlate to their children’s educational success (according to the National Center for Families Learning).

ASSESSMENT – BEST PLUS

What Is the BEST Plus?

The BEST Plus is a standardized assessment that examines English speaking and listening skills in a one-to-one setting. BEST Plus is a flexible, reliable oral proficiency assessment for adult learners receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. It is a face-to-face oral interview. BEST Plus measures performance over the full range of proficiency levels represented in adult education programs. The letters B-E-S-T stand for “Basic English Skills Test”. BEST Plus is intended to assess interpersonal communication using everyday language in practical situations. Test items reflect language used in daily life in the U.S. – at home, at work, and in the community.

Who Is Required to Take the BEST Plus?

Any foreign born student that wants to enroll in school is required to take the BEST Plus.

When and Where Will the BEST Plus Be Administered?

The BEST Plus will be administered prior to class placement in the intake office as part of the intake process.

How Long Does the Assessment Take?

Assessments vary in length, depending on the student’s knowledge of English. They appear to average between 5 and 20 minutes.

Who Administers the Test?

Those who have been certified by official NYS trainers are the only persons authorized to administer a test.

How Often Must the Student Take the BEST Plus?

The BEST Plus must be administered within the first twelve hours during intake (pre-test) and then after sixty hours of instruction (post-test). A post-test must be administered before a student exits a program even if they did not receive sixty hours of instruction. In addition, teacher discretion should be used if the teacher believes a student will make a gain. If this is apparent, then a post-test can be given before the 60 hours of instruction have been reached.

BEST Plus Advantages

- In the computer-adaptive version, computer software selects test

items appropriate to the examinee’s ability after the locator items have been administered.

- Each examinee’s oral English skills are assessed by a trained test administrator.
- Takes 10 to 20 minutes to administer, depending on the language proficiency of the examinee.

Authentic and Accessible Language

- Test items reflect language used in everyday life in the U.S. Sample questions include types of language used at home, at work, or in the community such as: talking about family members and family leisure/recreational activities, getting and maintaining a job, comparing services, and community participation in the U.S. and other societies.
- Communicative language functions are assessed and ranged from providing personal information about daily life to giving and supporting opinions about topics such as public education.

Importance of BEST Plus

BEST Plus is one of the standardized assessments approved for accountability reporting for the National Reporting System (NRS). BEST Plus assesses the oral proficiency of adult ESL across three components:

- **Listening comprehension** measures how well students understand spoken English.
- **Language complexity** measures the depth and breadth of students’ use of conversational English.
- **Communication** measures how well students can be understood when speaking English.

Educational Functioning Level Chart and Descriptions

Alignment of NRS Levels, Educational Functioning Levels, and BEST Plus Scale Scores

NRS Level	EFL	BEST Plus Score Range
Beginning ESL Literacy	0-1	400 and below
Low Beginning ESL	2	401 to 417
High Beginning ESL	3	418 to 438
Low Intermediate ESL	4	439 to 472
High Intermediate ESL	5	473 to 506
Advanced ESL	6	507 to 540
Exit from NRS ESL levels	7	541 and higher

A description of each Educational Functioning Level is defined as followed:

Beginning ESL Literacy

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or phrases.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language.
- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words.

Low Beginning ESL

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student can read numbers, letters, and some common sight words.
- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student functions with difficulty in social situations and in situations related to immediate needs.

High Beginning ESL

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student can read most sight words, and many other common words.
- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student can function in some situations related to immediate needs and in familiar social situations.

Low Intermediate ESL

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary.

- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student can interpret simple directions and schedules, signs, and maps.

High Intermediate ESL

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student can understand learned phrases and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly and with some repetition.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order) and can use context to determine meaning.
- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student can meet basic survival and social needs, can follow some simple oral and written instruction, and has some ability to communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects.

Advanced ESL

- **Speaking and Listening** - Student can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work; can understand and participate in conversation on a variety of everyday subjects, including some unfamiliar vocabulary, but may need repetition or rewording.
- **Basic Reading and Writing** - Student can read moderately complex text related to life roles, descriptions, and narratives from authentic materials on familiar subjects.
- **Functional and Workplace Skills** - Student can function independently to meet most survival needs and to use English in routine social and work situations.

Additional Resources

Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse
www.adultedcontentstandards.org

New York State Education Department
www.nysed.gov

Sources

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services
www.acces.nysed.gov

Center for Applied Linguistics
www.cal.org

English At Large
www.englishatlarge.org

National Reporting System
www.nrsweb.org

New York State Education Department – Office of Higher Education
www.highered.nysed.gov



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