



National Reporting System
for Adult Education

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ISSUE 5

Refining NRS Outcome Measurement for GED Prep Students

Issue Presented at Congress of State Directors

Students who enroll in adult education to obtain a secondary credential often have skills at the adult secondary education (ASE) level and may attend only long enough to receive remedial training in some areas that enable them to pass the GED tests. These “GED prep” students do not attend long enough to be posttested, and programs cannot report them as having completed an educational functioning level in National Reporting System (NRS). Because these students attend only to obtain a secondary credential, educational gain may not be an appropriate outcome measure for them and educational gain measures may be artificially deflated by including them in the computation of that measure.

To address this concern, OVAE proposed the following change to the NRS at the State Congress.

Create a separate level for GED prep students that includes all students who score at the secondary level on any NRS-approved test battery. Educational gain is not reported for these students, and they are not counted in calculation of education gain for any NRS level. The only reportable NRS outcome for these students is attainment of a secondary credential.

Summary of State Response

A majority of states (37) supported this policy recommendation, and 42 states indentified at least one advantage to the proposed policy recommendation. Some of the more commonly identified advantages include: 1) that it will eliminate the need for post-testing learners on track for a GED credential, which will help performance on education gain and reduce assessment costs; 2) teachers will not hold on to learners to ensure they are post-tested when those learners are ready to move on to GED testing; and 3) the change reflects the reality of the local programs, allowing them to develop criteria, guidance, and best practices for the this type of learner.

However, 10 states expressed some concerns, including: 1) the belief that automatic placement into this new category would allow too much discretion to local programs by manipulation of test scores, 2) a concern that students with low skills would be wrongly placed into this new category, and 3) this new category would create a perception that obtaining the GED is a final education goal. Also among the concerns was the need for adequate time to implement the change and the need for additional resources to make the necessary MIS changes and to fund the new training required for local programs. Several states suggested that a minimum test score should be defined for inclusion into this track, for example, by requiring that the lowest test score be at least at the low intermediate ABE level.

Four states noted that some ESL students preparing to take the GED would not be included in the proposed track because these students take the GED tests directly from ESL classes.

Final Recommendation

OVAE proposes to implement this new GED prep track beginning in Program Year (PY) 2012. This new track would be in addition to existing EFL NRS levels. Creating it would make two significant changes to current NRS policy for students that would be placed in this track. First, programs would not have to posttest these students or report on their educational gain. Second, programs would place students in the GED prep track if any score on at least one domain of an NRS approved assessment is at the adult secondary level, even if other scores indicate the student is at a lower level of functioning. Current NRS policy requires programs to place students in levels according to the *lowest* functioning area.

In creating this track, OVAE will revise the NRS Guidelines to include the new definition below.

New Definition for the GED Prep Track Outcome Measure

Definition: Learners who obtain certification of attaining passing scores on GED tests anytime up to six months after the end of the program year.

Applicable Population: Learners who score at the adult secondary level on any one domain of in any approved NRS assessment.

Federal Reporting: States report the total number of learners in the applicable population (see above) and the total number of learners that earned a GED credential within the reporting period. The GED Prep performance rate would be calculated by dividing these two numbers (the total number of learners who earned a GED credential within the reporting period divided by the total number of learners enrolled in the GED prep level).

Major Implications of Proposed Change

- State data systems will require revisions and local staff will need to be trained on the new level definition.
- To place students accurately in the track, programs would need to use tests that assess a broad range of skills areas, such as the full battery of the TABE and CASAS tests in reading and math. Programs would then place students in the GED prep track if any score of the test is at the secondary level, even if other scores indicate the student is at a lower level of functioning, contrary to current NRS policy for other students.
- Learners enrolled in GED Prep would not be included in an education gain measure and would not be posttested.
- NRS Table 4 will need revision or a new reporting table will need to be created to report this track.
- A reporting methodology must be developed to include ESL students who take the GED tests.