



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education

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David P. Driscoll  
Commissioner of Education

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** ABE Directors, SABES Coordinators, WIA Administrators and LWIB Directors

**FROM:** Bob Bickerton  
Anne Serino

**DATE:** January 7, 2003

**RE:** Assessment Policy Update

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We know and appreciate that you have been working diligently to implement the state's assessment policies. Please be assured that both your efforts to meet the increasing demands of accountability and your observations and comments about the state's assessment policies have not gone unheard. ACLS and the Directors' Council have been working together to address the challenges that you have brought to our attention.

While it is critical that we continue to build an accountability system that is capable of proving its effectiveness with reliable, valid and comparable data, we have been able to make some policy changes.

The most notable difference is the shift in policy from requiring that programs test students at specific intervals (every four months or after 65 hours of attendance) to a performance standard. **The adapted assessment performance standard requires that 70% of a program's enrolled students be pre- and post-tested.** This level of performance is based upon results from the actual performance of programs over the last two years, and was negotiated with the Directors' Council.

This revised policy shares more of the decision-making responsibility with programs as to when to test their students. However, it is **imperative** not to confuse achieving a standard of pre- and post-testing 70% of your students with testing twice a year. Achieving the standard will not be easy and it will be necessary for each program to carefully consider its past performance and develop an assessment plan. Your program specialist will contact you or you can contact her to discuss this policy change and to review what percentage of your students were pre- and post-tested in FY02.

Additionally, the following chart outlines ACLS’s response to other issues and concerns that have been brought to our attention by programs:

<i>Issues and Concerns that Programs have asked ACLS to address:</i>	<i>ACLS’s Response, from the Q&amp;A Session at the Directors’ Conference to now:</i>	<i>ACLS Assessment Policy:</i>
<p>ALL ASSESSMENTS: Replace the requirement to conduct assessments three times per year with an 80% pre/post test standard, as proposed by the Director’s Council.</p>	<p>ACLS is amending the policy to state that: programs must pre/post test at least <b>70%</b> of their enrolled students (a more realistic number given prior years’ pre/post averages).</p>	<p>Programs must pre/post test at least <b>70%</b> of their enrolled students within a Fiscal Year.</p>
<p>BEST: Administer the BEST Test at intake</p>	<p>ACLS agreed to this based on the concerns of the field regarding the amount of time administering the BEST is taking and the fact that an “oral assessment” tends to create less anxiety than many other forms of testing.</p>	<p>The Oral Interview of the BEST Test (Forms B and C) can be given at intake.</p>
<p>BEST: Lower the initial number of co-administrations of the BEST Test from 20 to 10.</p>	<p>ACLS lowered the number of co-administrations from 20 to 15 after consulting with the BEST test developers at the Center for Applied Linguistics.</p>	<p>The BEST test is a performance-based assessment and co-administrations are necessary to ensure that scoring is consistent and based on the rubric. Testers need to co-administer the first 15 tests that they give. An additional 10 co-administrations should be done whenever a period of two months has elapsed between co-administrations.</p>

<i>Issues and Concerns that Programs have asked ACLS to address:</i>	<i>ACLS's Response, from the Q&amp;A Session at the Directors' Conference to now:</i>	<i>ACLS Assessment Policy:</i>
<p>BEST: If you are testing frequently, is it still necessary to do the 15/10/10 co-administrations?</p>	<p>ACLS is working with the Center for Educational Assessment at UMass Amherst to explore other ways of achieving interrater reliability.</p>	<p>It is necessary to co-administer the tests at these amounts to ensure interrater reliability and build the field's capacity to perform reliable and valid assessments.</p>
<p>TABE: Administer the TABE Test at intake.</p>	<p>ACLS adapted the policy to allow the TABE test to be administered before class enrollment, but it still cannot be administered the day of intake. The rationale is to reduce the effect of test anxiety on student retention and pre-test scores.</p>	<p>The "long form" of the TABE (Complete Battery, Forms 7&amp;8) may be given any time after the day of intake. This should be the second or subsequent point of contact with the students – or any time thereafter up to three weeks after enrollment.</p>
<p>TABE: Allow a teacher to administer the TABE to his/her own students.</p>	<p>When this policy was developed in July, ACLS built in a delayed implementation of the requirement that teachers not administer the TABE to their own students. Teachers can administer the TABE to their own students until <b>1 March 2003</b>. We will work with the Center for Educational Assessment at UMass Amherst to determine whether a modification can/should be made to this policy.</p>	<p>Teachers can administer the TABE to their own students until <b>1 March 2003</b>. After March, teachers can no longer administer the TABE to their own students.</p>

<b><i>Issues and Concerns that Programs have asked ACLS to address:</i></b>	<b><i>ACLS's Response, from the Q&amp;A Session at the Directors' Conference to now:</i></b>	<b><i>ACLS Assessment Policy:</i></b>
<p>TABE: Allow programs to alter how they administer the TABE Locator test and/or use other assessment instruments to determine which full form(s) of the TABE to administer.</p>	<p>ACLS will be asking 4 programs to conduct a pilot test using the TABE Locator to determine the impact of changing different aspects of its administration (e.g., timed, not timed) on its reliability for predicting which level of the full form of the TABE to administer. Both programs and students involved in these 4 pilots will receive a stipend for their participation.</p>	<p>All other programs should continue to administer and score the TABE Locator and related TABE tests according to the test developer's direction, in order to keep the process as standardized as possible across the state. If each program makes its own decision about how they will administer the Locator, then the data will not be consistent and will be useless.</p>
<p>ALL ASSESSMENTS: Lessen the length of time between pre-and post-test from 4 months to a lesser amount.</p>	<p>ACLS amended the policy to allow programs the option of testing every 4 months or after 65 hours of instruction, whichever occurs first.</p>	<p>The policy allows programs the option of testing every 4 months or after 65 hours of instruction.</p>

Thank you for your hard work in what we know has been a challenging period. We encourage you to keep providing us with input as we go forward with implementing the assessment policies. Please contact your program specialist with questions and concerns.

Last but not least, we wish you a Happy New Year!