

Glossary – ABE/ESL in Nevada

The purpose of this glossary is to define some common terms used for ABE/ESL programs; it was developed as a training resource for instructors and tutors who are new to teaching adults. **Specific notes on Nevada's policies appear in green.** More extensive glossaries can be found at www.literacynet.org/lincs/glossary.html and at www.otan.us (click on research and reference).

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Adult education that includes reading, writing, and math skills at a level below high school completion. Often, these classes include speakers of other languages who have advanced beyond ESL or ESOL classes. *World Education, November 2000.*

Note: In practice, people frequently use the term "ABE program" to indicate programs that provide classes and services to adult ABE and ESL students.

For purposes of federal reporting, the NRS (National Reporting System) defines six educational functioning levels for ABE —beginning literacy, beginning basic education, low intermediate basic education, high intermediate basic education, low adult secondary education, and high adult secondary education. Each level describes a set of skills and competencies in reading, writing, numeracy, functional and workplace areas. At [CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ABE](#) is a description of the skills for each level for programs using the CASAS system. *NRS*

ABE Certificate of Performance

A Certificate awarded to Nevada's instructors and tutors to recognize competence and performance in the ABE/ESL classroom. The Certificate is based on demonstrated proficiency in achieving outcomes in support of the Nevada State Plan and/or individual federally funded program grant objectives. See <http://www.literacynet.org/nvabecp/index.html> for more information.

AEFLA-funded programs

Adult education programs federally funded through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE)

Used by AEFLA-funded programs for federal reporting through the NRS, refers to the two highest levels in adult basic education programs. ASE students are frequently working toward passing the GED Tests.

Benchmark

An expected level of content mastery and/or performance; usually includes a time element.

CASAS

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System. A competency-based system that is used for placement and measurement of individual student progress. **All AEFLA-funded programs in Nevada must use CASAS for assessing their ABE and ESL students.** www.casas.org/

CASAS Competency List

A list of 300-plus competencies that cover nine content areas: basic communication, consumer economics, community resources, health, employment, government and law, computation, learning to learn, and independent living skills. These competencies have been correlated to the SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) competencies that were identified by the U.S. Department of Labor to help learners and instructors apply teaching and learning in a "real world context." *CASAS*

Civics/Citizenship

- **Civics literacy** - A broad term that includes instruction on how to gain U.S. citizenship; instruction about U.S. History and culture, including lessons on diversity and multiculturalism; and instruction and guidance on becoming active participants in the learners' new communities. *National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)*
- **Civics education** - An educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help learners acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members. *Federal definition.*
- **Citizenship literacy** - A subset of civics education, the goal of which is to help adult immigrants learn enough procedural information, content, and language to complete the naturalization process, pass the citizenship exam, and become U.S. citizens. *National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)*

Computer Literacy

The degree to which individuals are familiar with computer operating systems and applications.

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/readinessguide/glossary.html>

Content Standards

Clear statements of what students should know and be able to do at specific points as they move through the educational spectrum. Nevada's Adult Education Content Standards for AEFLA-funded programs are posted at <http://www.literacynet.org/nevada/standards/index.htm> *A Blueprint for Preparing America's Future (USDOE, 2003)*

Contact Hours

Hours of instruction or instructional activity the student receives from the program. Instructional activity includes any program-sponsored activity designed to promote student learning in the program curriculum such as classroom instruction, assessment, tutoring, or (supervised) participation in a learning lab.

Core Measures

(often used interchangeably with core indicators)

Required outcome, descriptive, and participation measures that reflect the core indicator requirements of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. States must report the required measures on all students who receive 12 hours or more of service. The Department of Education will use these measures to judge program performance, including eligibility for incentive grants.

Required core outcome measures are: 1) Educational Gain; 2) Entered Employment; 3) Retained Employment; 4) Receipt of a Secondary School Diploma or GED; 5) Placement in Post-secondary Education or Training. Items 2 through 5 are also called **Follow-up** Measures. Programs must report on the four follow-up measures only for those students who specify one of them as a main or secondary goal. *NRS Online*

Secondary Outcome Measures are optional measures of student outcomes in the areas of employment, community and family: 1) Reduction in receipt of public assistance; 2) Met work-based project learner goal; 3) Achieved citizenship skills, registered to vote or voted for the first time, or increased involvement in community activities; 4) Increased involvement in children's education or in children's literacy-related activities. *NRS Online*

Demographics

The characteristics of human populations and population segments, e.g., age, race, sex, etc.

Developmental Disability

A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability in an individual five years of age or older that:

1. Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental and physical impairments
2. Is manifested before the person attains age 22
3. Is likely to continue indefinitely
4. Results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, economic self-sufficiency and
5. Reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated. *Federal Definition, per <http://acdd.org/content.asp?id=200301>.*

See www.literacynet.org/nevada/sdocs/ldgd.pdf for guidelines on Service To Learners With Special Needs, Learning Disabilities, and Developmental Disabilities.

Distance Education

Formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail or online technologies and software. *NRS 6/07*

Educational Functioning Level (EFL)

One of 12 levels (six for ABE and six for ESL) at which a student is performing. Each level describes student performance in areas such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, functional skills, and the workplace. **Nevada uses a student's initial CASAS assessment to determine the student's educational functioning level for placement in the appropriate class.** Advancement among levels defines student progress or educational gain. You can find descriptions of each level at:

[CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ABE](#)

[CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ESL](#)

Educational Gain (Required Core Outcome Measure)

Learner completes or advances one or more educational functioning levels from starting level measured on entry into the program. Applicable population: all learners. *NRS*

Employability Competency System (ECS)

A CASAS pre-employment training system that assesses job readiness and performance ability, this system provides assessment, training, and evaluation based on critical competencies and skill areas required for success in the workplace. ECS provides a structure in which learners' strengths and weaknesses are assessed in relation to the basic skills necessary to obtain, retrain or advance in a job. These competencies and skill areas directly correlate to those established by the U.S. Department of Labor's Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The commission developed the standard for skills and abilities all individuals need in order to function successfully in our modern workplace and society. *Workforce Learning Systems, Center for Workforce Development, CASAS*

Entered Employment (Required Core Outcome Measure)

Learner obtains a job before the end of the first quarter after the program exit quarter. Applicable population: Learners who are not employed at time of entry and who have a main or secondary goal of obtaining employment. *NRS*

English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or English Language Learners (ELL)

Instruction for immigrants, refugees, or other adults whose primary language is not English to improve speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. (*World Education, November 2000*)

Note: According to NCLE, the politically correct term is English Language Learners.

For purposes of federal reporting, the NRS (National Reporting System) defines six educational functioning levels for ESL—beginning literacy, low beginning, high beginning, low intermediate, high intermediate, and advanced. Each level describes a set of skills and competencies in reading, writing, speaking, listening, functional and workplace areas. At [CASAS Skill Level Descriptors for ESL](#) is a description of the skills for each level for programs using the CASAS system. *NRS*

Faith-based Literacy Programs

Literacy programs developed, operated, and supported by religious organizations, churches, synagogues, mosques, and ministries.

Family Literacy Services

Services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate all of the following activities:

- Parent and Child Together (PACT): Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children
- Parent Education: Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Adult Basic Education: Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency
- Early Childhood Education: Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. *Federal legislation, 1998 and 2001*

Financial Literacy

The ability to effectively understand and manage one's personal finances.

- Personal financial literacy is the ability to read, analyze, manage, and communicate about the personal financial conditions that affect material well-being. *Nevada Rural Housing Authority*

Health Literacy

The degree to which people can obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions. *National Library of Medicine's bibliography on health literacy, "Health Literacy Toolbox," 2000*

Indicator

An observable comparison of content mastery and/or performance to a given standard.

Information Literacy

- The ability to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources. *Christina Doyle, final report to the National Forum on Information Literacy, 1992*
- A set of abilities requiring individuals to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." *American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report*

Learning Disabilities

A general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences. *National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1994. Definition also adopted by National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center*

Literacy

An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society. *Workforce Investment Act (WIA) 1998*

Library Literacy Programs

Adult literacy programs developed, operated, and supported by public libraries or in partnership with public libraries. *Nevada Literacy Office*

Math Literacy

The terms "mathematical literacy" and "numeracy" are used interchangeably. Both terms should be viewed as loosely referring to the aggregate of skills, knowledge, beliefs, patterns of thinking, and related communicative and problem-solving processes individuals need to effectively interpret and handle real-world quantitative situations, problems, and tasks. *Adult Numeracy Network*

Media Literacy

The ability to understand how mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how to use them wisely. *The Media Center*

National Reporting System (NRS)

An outcome-based reporting system for the state-administered, federally funded adult education programs. *NRS, <http://www.nrsweb.org/>*

Numeracy

See "math literacy."

Performance Measures

(often used interchangeably with performance indicators)

[Numeric levels](#) established for outcome measures in the [Nevada State Plan for Adult Basic Education](#) indicating what proportion of students at each level will achieve each outcome. *NRS*

Persistence

Adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study or distance education when they must stop attending program services, and returning to program services as soon as the demands of their lives allow. *NCSALL*

Placement In Post-Secondary Education Or Training

(Required Core Outcome Measure)

Learner enrolls in a post-secondary educational or occupational skills training program that does not duplicate other services or training received, regardless of whether the prior services or training were completed. Applicable population: All learners with a goal of placement in post-secondary education or training.

Quality Indicators for Nevada

Statements that describe what efficient and effective performance “looks like” in Nevada, with specifications for expected levels of content mastery and/or performance. Categories include student outcomes, data management, program management, community interaction and outreach, curriculum and instruction, retention, program evaluation, and professional development.

Retained Employment

(Required Core Outcome Measure)

Learner remains employed in the third quarter after exit quarter. Applicable population: Learners who, at time of entry were not employed and had a main or secondary goal of obtaining employment, and who entered employment by the first quarter after exit quarter; or learner is employed at entry and has a primary or secondary goal of improved or retained employment. *NRS*

Receipt Of A Secondary School Diploma Or GED

(Required Core Outcome Measure)

Learner obtains certification of attaining passing scores on the General Education Development (GED) tests, or who obtains a diploma, or state recognized equivalent, documenting satisfactory completion of secondary studies (high school or adult high school diploma). Applicable population: All learners with a main or secondary goal of passing the GED tests or obtaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. *NRS*

Retention

There are many definitions and ways of calculating retention. The most common definition is: Students continue in the program until student goals are met or until the course of study is completed.

As a result of recent NCSALL research, the term “persistence” is replacing “retention” because it places the student in a position of control and decision-making — “A student persists in learning; a program retains a student.”

Nevada Policy: When calculating retention for the purpose of qualifying for the Adult Basic Educator’s Certificate of Performance, Nevada measures student retention in light of time spent in a program.

Retention is calculated as follows: Number of students post-tested divided by number of students pre-tested. Test scores must be paired.

For numerator: Count only students post-tested within 30-120 hours of instruction.

For denominator: Count all pre-tested students who have 12 or more hours of instruction.

Secondary Outcome Measures

See Core Measures

Special Needs

A broad term that incorporates the need for some type of accommodation. For example, students with special needs may have a physical disability (e.g., sight or hearing), a learning disability (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, processing or memory problems), or a developmental disability (e.g., mental retardation, autism, Down Syndrome, or Cerebral Palsy).

Standard

The specification of a desired level of content mastery and/or performance. *Adapted from "education standard" definition by Tuijnman & Postlethwaite, 1994, p.2*

TOPSpro

Tracking Of Programs and Students. A software database system designed to score and manage CASAS test data in conjunction with a local management information system. Along with scoring and tracking students' CASAS test results, it also collects student demographics, tracks results in programs, scores tests, tracks progress, and generates reports at the student, class, and agency level. TOPSpro generates numerous reports that can be printed and distributed throughout the agency to serve a variety of program needs. **All AEFLA-funded programs in Nevada must TOPSpro for reporting to the NRS.** www.casas.org, under "products and services"

Volunteer Literacy Program

Community-based organizations that develop, operate, and support adult literacy tutoring. *Nevada Literacy Office*

Workforce and Workplace Literacy

Definitions below taken from Basic Skills in the Workplace, Northwest Regional Literacy Resource Center, March 1997

- **Workforce Literacy:** Literacy instruction that is not necessarily tied to a particular workplace. Workforce literacy also includes opportunities for displaced workers to upgrade their skills to prepare for retraining or new employment.
- **Workplace Education:** Umbrella term used to describe the field of education opportunities (not training) that promote the development of work-related basic skills/literacy skills. Curriculum is workplace-specific. Instruction is mostly offered at the worksite.
- **Workplace Literacy:** Literacy instruction that ties literacy requirements to a particular workplace and its workers.
- **Workplace ESL/ESOL:** Instruction in English at the workplace to speakers of other languages, very often with a work-specific focus.
- **Workplace Basic Skills:** Umbrella term used to refer to the key skills needed at or in preparation for entry into a particular workplace or the workforce.

Several working definitions are used that sometimes contradict each other. Some are narrow and include only reading, writing, math, oral communication and problem solving. Others are broader and may include any of the following: oral communication, reading, writing, computation, math, problem-solving, analytical thinking, the ability to maintain self-esteem, the ability to self-manage, interpersonal and intercultural skills, the ability to self-direct learning and the ability to adapt to change, etc. The terms **workplace basic skills** and **workplace literacy skills** are often used interchangeably.

- **Workplace Basic Skills Analysis:** Process used to determine which basic skills are needed or will be needed to perform certain jobs, tasks, and workers. Formal methods include literacy audits and literacy job/task analysis.