

Michigan's Transition to Postsecondary Education and the Workplace



Assessment Addendum

**Workforce Development Agency State of Michigan
Education and Career Readiness
Office of Adult Education**

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Assessment System for Michigan's Transition Programs

“Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness includes the knowledge and skills that high school graduates need in order to do credit bearing coursework at a [two-or four-year] college or university and/or to embark successfully on a career-track employment position (that pays a living wage, provides benefits, and offers clear pathways for advancement through further education and training).”

Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts. (2004). Achieve, Inc,

What Is Assessment?

Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. Some definitions divide assessment into the areas of measurement and evaluation. Collecting information about how much knowledge and skill students have learned is defined as the measurement component of assessment. Making judgments about the adequacy of a student's learning is defined as evaluation.

The Role of Assessment in Teaching

Assessing student learning is something that every instructor does. Written tests, research papers, homework exercises, presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and projects are just some of the ways in which we measure student learning. Why do we assess student learning?

The most common reasons for assessment are to:

- ❖ Provide summaries of learning (summative evaluation)
- ❖ Provide information on learning progress (formative evaluation)
- ❖ Diagnose specific strengths and weaknesses in an individual's learning (diagnosis)
- ❖ Motivate further learning (effects on learning)

Just as assessment can play several roles in the classroom, assessment is also an important process in a transition program. The assessment phase of the intake process is designed to gather data about a student's academic skill level (summative evaluation). This data provides the instructor with a clear picture of the student's academic strengths and weaknesses (diagnosis), as well as placement suitability of a student into the **Michigan Transition Program**.

Appropriate course placement is critical for success in both the transition program and ultimately in those courses that comprise a student's postsecondary education and training program. If program placement is inappropriate based on a student's strengths or weaknesses, learning will not be optimal.

To ensure student success in the transition program, you will want to:

- ❖ Develop an assessment process that includes tools such as: test batteries required for federal reporting, summative and formative instruments for initial and ongoing assessment, career and interest inventories to initiate college and career planning, learning style inventories, the Official GED® Practice Test (OPT), and college placement tests (Accuplacer, Compass).
- ❖ Interview each student at enrollment to set individual goals and to learn about specific academic difficulties, past educational experiences, job skills, other abilities, and interests.
- ❖ Administer a standardized test to assess a student's basic skills and establish a baseline for progress and outcomes measurement.
- ❖ Schedule individual meetings with students to discuss their progress towards their goals – career, college, and personal.

Purposes and Uses for NRS-Approved Assessment Tools

There are many different purposes and uses for assessment tools. In adult education programs, assessment is used for reporting purposes, for developing an appropriate curriculum based on student strengths and weaknesses, and to ensure that students achieve their personal and academic goals.

Assessments for federal reporting purposes are those that are approved by the National Reporting System (NRS). These assessment tools are used to:

- ❖ Measure the initial Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) of students to place them in alignment with NRS levels.
- ❖ Measure the educational achievement of students as they progress through NRS levels.
- ❖ Identify and confirm the educational strengths and weaknesses of students.
- ❖ Counsel students effectively in setting annual educational goals.
- ❖ Measure program performance and set expected performance standards for programs that receive federal grants.
- ❖ Measure program performance and compare the performance of programs at the state level.
- ❖ Provide a basis for the USDOE to negotiate expected performance levels with the state.
- ❖ Provide reliable information for programs to make decisions on the professional development, technical assistance, and monitoring necessary.

Adult education students must be tested during the enrollment process in order to be placed in the appropriate level of study. This is the reason for correctly administering assessment tools – to obtain an accurate, reliable, and valid score for each student. If the assessment tool is not administered according to the test requirements, students may not be placed correctly.

Recommended testing procedures established by test publishers should be followed for proper test administration, such as:

- ❖ preparing the testing room including seating plans;
- ❖ securing and storing test materials;
- ❖ admitting examinees to the testing room including recommended identification documents;
- ❖ distributing and collecting materials;
- ❖ documenting irregularities;
- ❖ reading test instructions and directions to examinees; and
- ❖ following testing time guidelines.

The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is the most widely used assessment instrument for the GED® program and was developed specifically for the adult learner. The TABE 9 and 10 has different content levels. As viewed in the following chart, a student enrolled in an ASE or GED® program should obtain a 9.0 on TABE, Level A. This is important information to know when assessing student preparedness for a GED® transition program.

TABE 9/10 Content Ranges

TABE 9/10 Levels	Content Range
Level E	2.0-3.9
Level M	4.0 – 5.9
Level D	6.0 – 8.9
Level A	9.0 – 12.0

The TABE, as well as other NRS assessment tools, is used for the following three purposes: to test basic educational skills using adult content for “appropriate” placement in adult education classes (pretest); to measure achievement of basic skills taught in adult education curricula (posttest); and, to successfully “transition” students beyond Adult Education Programs.

It’s recommended that when using a NRS-approved assessment tool, the entire battery be used to ensure valid, reliable, and accurate student placements and achievement measurements.

Purposes and Uses for Additional Assessment Tools

While the results of non-NRS approved assessments are not allowed to be used for reporting student progress to the state, they are important tools in measuring progress and helping students learn. Assessment tools, such as college placement tests (Accuplacer, Compass), the Official GED® Practice Test (OPT), learning style inventories, and career inventories. These different types of formative and summative assessments provide information that assists instructors in determining what students known and do not know at a specific point in time, as well as assessing programmatic stands-based learning goals.

Although the Official GED® Practice Tests are not included on the state approved list, these tests provide valuable information for program placement and identification of areas of student strengths and weaknesses, especially in a GED® preparatory or GED® transition program. This data is useful in providing specific instruction for the individual student, as well as determining whether a student has the skills necessary for entrance into a GED® transition program.

The Compass and the Accuplacer, are computer-adaptive college placement tests that assist educators in accurately evaluating incoming students' academic skill levels, placing them in appropriate academic courses, documenting compliance, and successfully benchmarking students' progress toward college readiness. These tools may be used in Michigan's Transition program to assess college readiness, as well as to develop a college-ready curriculum.

Alternate assessment tools, such as the Official GED® Practice Test, Compass, and Accuplacer, should be correctly administered according to the testing procedures established by the test publishers. Proper test administration and test security are important for all assessment tools.

As students prepare for postsecondary education and the workplace, they may wish to better understand how they learn best. Learning style inventories, such as the VARK, can assist them in identifying strengths and weakness in different learning modalities. The VARK is available to educators and to students at: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>.

Career and interest inventories are another area of assessment that can assist students in preparing for postsecondary education and the workplace. Regardless of age, educational/employment goals, family or economic circumstance, career/transition planning is an important component of every individual's educational program.

Career assessment and planning involves:

- ❖ the identification of interests, aptitudes, abilities, and career/ employment goals;
- ❖ an assessment of special needs or the need for special support services or testing procedure modifications in the educational setting and the workplace; and
- ❖ the development of a course of study, including the classes and activities needed to reach individual goals.

A variety of strategies and assessment tools can be used to assist adult learners in developing a career plan. JIST Publishing provides different types of career and interest inventories developed for the adult learner - <http://www.jist.com/shop/web>.

Implementing Entrance and Exit Assessment Criteria

Obtaining accurate assessment data is important to the success of a GED® transition student. As Michigan's Transition program is developed in your institution, ensure that the entrance and exit criterion that is approved by your collaborative partnership is based on the needs of the students. Student success is the goal of your program.

As you develop entrance and exit criteria, you may wish to review the following suggested recommendations.

Entrance Criteria

It is important that students entering Michigan's Transition program have the academic preparation necessary to be successful in an enhanced curriculum program. The rigor of the accelerated course of study requires that students entering have mastery of literacy and numeracy skills, such as writing effective multi-paragraph essays; solving high-order

mathematical problems that include fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios, rational and irrational numbers; and comprehending reading materials at the high school level.

It is recommended that students who enter ***Michigan's Transition*** program have:

- ❖ a minimum of a 10.0 grade level equivalent in reading, mathematics, and language or a corresponding scale score on a state approved assessment instrument
- ❖ an overall average score of 450 or above on the Official GED® Practice Test (OPT)

If a student does not meet the criteria, an academic admission team may be convened to identify additional criteria that may be used to allow entrance into the program. These criteria may include, but not be limited to:

- ❖ successful completion of high school level courses in Language Arts and Algebra;
- ❖ successful participation and/or completion of Adult Basic Education or General Education Preparatory courses; and/or
- ❖ SAT/ACT scores commensurate with those scores that indicate enrollment into college developmental/remedial courses.

Exit Criteria

The goal of ***Michigan's Transition program*** is to prepare students for entry into a college credit granting program of study without enrollment into remedial/developmental courses. In order to best assist students in meeting this goal, it is recommended that students who exit this program:

- ❖ Obtain a passing score of 600 or higher on all areas of the GED® Official Practice Test prior to taking the GED® test
- ❖ Write essays at the 4.0 level
- ❖ Complete a program of study to the mastery level that includes:
 - Writing Skills
 - Reading Comprehension
 - Higher Levels of Mathematics, including Pre-Algebra and Algebra
 - College Survival Skills (including basic computer literacy, testing, note-taking, setting goals, and time management)
- ❖ Obtain an average of 550 or higher on the GED® tests
- ❖ Complete a local college placement test (with need for minimal or no remediation)

Assessment to Support Instruction and Student Outcomes

Assessment is a necessary tool for entrance into and exit from **Michigan's Transition** program and for the continuous tracking of a student's progress and instructional needs. Comprehensive assessment information provides accurate estimates of student performance and enables teachers and other decision makers to form appropriate decisions. As you develop a comprehensive assessment plan, it is important that you:

1. Identify the purpose for each type of assessment required for student success, select appropriate assessment tools, and decide on the relative importance for each type of assessment tool used.
2. Develop both formative and summative assessment tools as part of your GED® transition program.
3. Implement the assessment plan, ensuring that all assessment tools are delivered according to the testing procedures established by the test publishers.
4. Evaluate the results of the assessment plan based on student outcomes and successful transition to postsecondary education and training programs.

An effective assessment plan is an integral part of **Michigan's Transition** program – one that requires fine tuning as you develop a program that will assist students in completing their goal of successfully achieving their GED® credential and moving into postsecondary education and training without the need for remedial or developmental education.

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