

# Are You Literate on the Lit/Num Common Measure?



This desk aide for state and local staff consists of the following sections:

1. About the Literacy/Numeracy Gains Measure
2. About Assessments
3. About Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs)
4. About Participation Years
5. About Lit/Num Reporting
6. Questions & Answers

## 1. ABOUT THE LITERACY/NUMERACY GAINS MEASURE

### Basic Facts:

- Targets basic skills deficient out-of-school youth
- This is considered the only real-time common measure because the measurement cohort is the same as that used for participation (no lag time)
- Involves a pre/post assessment with up to one year in between to advance skill levels
- Measurement is based on *youth* program participation (i.e., measured at the one year anniversary based on date of first youth service or FYS)
  - Youth Program Participation has the same meaning as Date of FYS
- Pertinent federal policy guidance: TEGL 17-05, TEGL 17-05 Change 2, and TEGL 18-11 (links below)  
[http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=2195](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2195)  
[http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=2759](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=2759)  
[http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=4054](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=4054)

### How is it Defined?

*Of those out-of-school youth who are basic skills deficient:* The number who increase one or more educational functioning levels (EFL) *divided* by the number who complete a year in the youth program *plus* the number who exit before completing their first year. For years two and three, the definition changes slightly to: The number who increase one or more educational functioning levels *divided* by the number who complete their second (or third) year. (Youth are excluded from this measure after their third year.)

### Who's Included?

This is another way of asking who's in the denominator. The measure includes only *out-of-school youth who are basic skills deficient*. In other words, the first criterion for inclusion is youth who are out-of-school. The second criterion for inclusion is basic skills deficiency.

For the purpose of this measure, an out-of-school youth is a youth who is either not attending school (i.e., a high school dropout or high school graduate) or attending post-secondary school but is basic skills deficient.

In other words, a HS dropout or graduate who is not attending school will always be considered an out-of-school youth whether basic skills deficient or not (if not basic skills deficient, they would not be included in the measure), but a youth attending post-secondary school is only considered an out-of-school youth if basic skills deficient.

Basic Skills Deficient means the individual computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the eighth grade level or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society (reference WIA, Sec. 101(4)).

In addition, as stated in the official reporting instructions for WIA individual records, "states and grantees have the option of establishing their own definition, which must include [this] language. In cases where states or grantees establish such a definition, that definition will be used for basic literacy skills determination."

The determination of "Basic Skills Deficient" is made at the point of participation and generally does not change.

### What's a Positive Outcome?

This is another way of asking who's in the numerator. Youth who demonstrate on a post-test that they advanced one or more EFLs beyond the level at which they first tested in either reading/writing or math would be considered a positive outcome. A gain in *any* area is a positive outcome.

## 2. ABOUT ASSESSMENTS

### Basic Facts:

- DOL policy requires that all out-of-school youth be assessed in basic reading/writing and math to determine their initial EFL.
- Youth need an increase in reading/writing or math to count as a positive outcome for this measure.
- If an out-of-school youth is recorded as basic skills deficient without pre-test results recorded, the youth will count as a negative outcome for the measure; *Record all test results!*
- There are two assessment categories. Each consists of progressive EFLs:
  1. Adult Basic Education (ABE)
  2. English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Only assessment instruments approved by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) can be utilized. Approved tests yield scores that can be cross-walked to EFLs. For a current list of approved tests, see ED's announcement published annually in the Federal Register at <https://www.federalregister.gov/>. For a current EFL table, refer to ED's National Reporting System (NRS) Implementation Guidelines at <http://www.nrsweb.org/>.
- ED periodically updates the NRS Guidelines and list of approved tests; checking for updates regularly is advised.
- Service providers may use different approved assessments across programs, but must use the same instrument to pre- and post- test the same youth.
- A previous assessment can be utilized if it's an approved instrument in the NRS and conducted within 6 months of FYS (or youth program participation).
- If no previous assessment, it is recommended that a pre-test be given within 60 days of FYS to maximize the time available to achieve a positive outcome. However, pre-tests dated after the 60-day point will still be considered valid pre-tests.
- For year one, a post-test must show a gain prior to the one year anniversary date of first youth service in order to be a positive outcome; the gain is counted in the quarter and year in which the anniversary date falls (i.e., reported in the WIASRD) and translated into an associated EFL.
- How program operators address *assessments* is a primary factor contributing to positive outcomes on this measure. For example:
  - Pre-test at intake or within 60 days of FYS;
  - Scores from approved assessments within 6 months of FYS are allowable; and
  - Ensure timely testing within one year of FYS.

## 3. ABOUT EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVELS (EFLs)

There are two sets of EFLs – one for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and one for English as a Second Language (ESL). Each has six levels, and each level contains skills and competencies that students entering at that level demonstrate.

### EFLs for Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Each ABE level describes basic reading, writing, numeracy, and functional and workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The first four ABE levels indicate basic skills deficiency. The last two ABE levels indicate non basic skills deficiency.

Beginning Literacy Beginning Basic Education Low Intermediate Basic Education High Intermediate Basic Education	Basic Skills Deficient
Low Adult Secondary Education High Adult Secondary Education	Not Basic Skills Deficient

### EFLs for English as a Second Language (ESL)

Each ESL level describes speaking/listening skills and basic reading, writing and functional workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. All of the levels for ESL represent basic skills deficiency. It is necessary to score above *Advanced ESL* to be basic skills proficient. (Reporting instructions for individual records identify the level above *Advanced ESL* as *Exit ESL*.)

Beginning Literacy Low Beginning ESL High Beginning ESL Low Intermediate ESL High Intermediate ESL Advanced ESL	Basic Skills Deficient
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## 4. ABOUT PARTICIPATION YEARS

**First Participation Year** From the date of first youth service (FYS) to the first anniversary date, inclusive. (In other words, if the date of FYS is 1/13/12, the first participation year ends on 1/13/13. A post-test given on or before 1/13/13 would count because it is within the first participation year.)

**Second Participation Year** From the day after the first anniversary date to the second anniversary date; youth are only included in the measure if they complete the full year. (Based on the previous scenario, the second participation year would be

1/14/13 to 1/13/14. In other words, for the first year, programs actually have a year and a day for the purpose of ensuring the youth increases an EFL. For the second and third years of participation, youth have one year.)

**Third Participation Year** From the day after the second anniversary date to the third anniversary date; youth are only included in the measure if they complete the full year. (Based on the previous scenario, the third participation year would be 1/14/14 to 1/13/15.)

**After Third Participation Year** Youth are excluded from the measure.

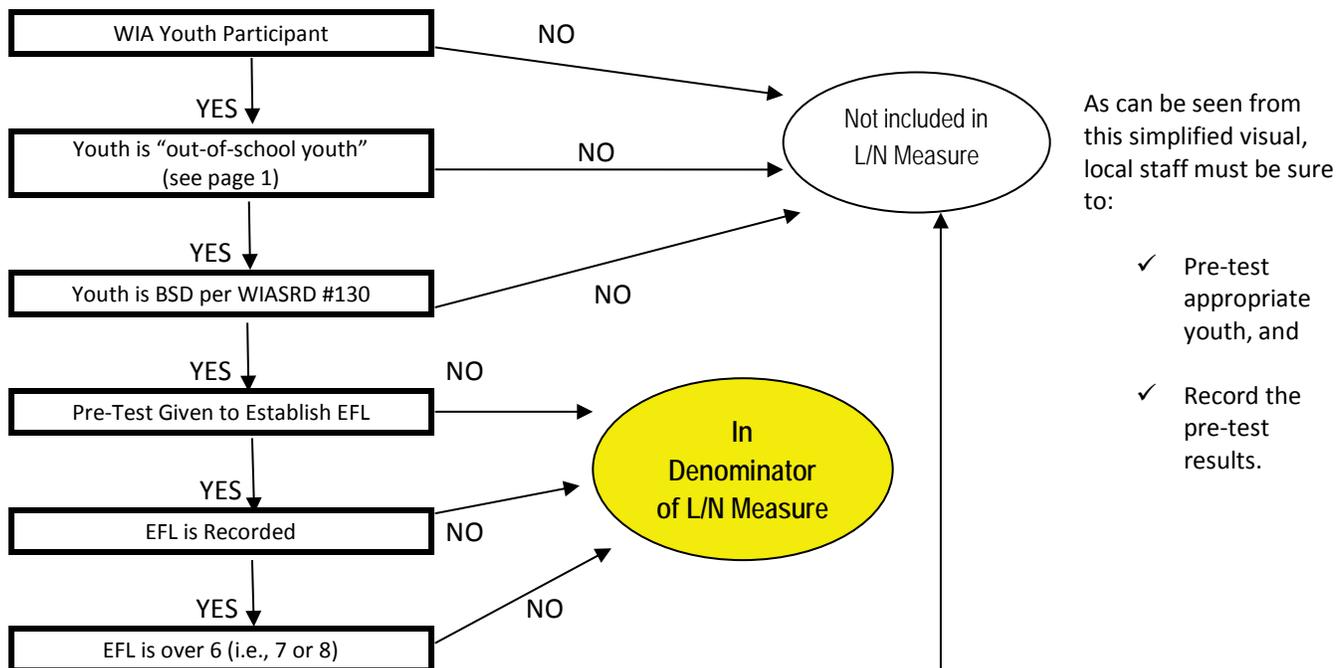
**TIP:**

Think in Terms of Anniversaries

- ✓ First anniversary is one year from date of FYS.
- ✓ Those that exit prior to the first anniversary date are not included in the cohort until the first anniversary of the date of FYS.
- ✓ Exiting prior to the second or third anniversary date excludes youth from the measure for the second and third years. In other words, youth who exit *during* their second or third year don't count in the measure a second or third time.
- ✓ Inclusion in the measure (i.e., in the denominator) is always based on the anniversary date being in the reporting cohort. Those that exit prior to the first anniversary date are not included in the cohort until the first anniversary of the date of FYS.
- ✓ There are no Literacy/Numeracy calculations after year three.

## 5. ABOUT LIT/NUM REPORTING

Lit/Num information is captured in the WIA individual record or WIASRD (WIA Standardized Record Data). The “triggers” for inclusion in the Lit/Num measure is out-of-school youth status first, and then basic skills deficiency. WIASRD #130 is the data element for *Basic Skills Deficiency*, which is coded as a 1 for YES or a 2 for NO. Local staff may not realize that checking yes for *Basic Skills Deficiency* on an intake form that is later data-entered in their local management information system *translates into recording 1 for WIASRD Element #130*. Once the triggers are, in effect, “turned on,” the youth will be included in the measure except if the pre-test EFL is >6. Portrayed visually, we have the following scenario:



Turning our attention to another aspect of Lit/Num Reporting, the collection of assessment data for youth who are basic skills deficient is organized according to Type of Assessment Test and Functional Area. **The WIASRD format accommodates data for up to three separate educational functioning areas (such as math or reading), each of which can be tracked for up to three**

**years as necessary.** Attachment A of TEGL 17-09 contains the WIASRD record layout – containing data elements and definitions – which can be accessed at <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL17-09a1.pdf>.

**EXAMPLE:**

WIASRD #701 (Category of Assessment) is the first data element for Literacy/Numeracy, with three possible coding choices: 1=ABE; 2=ESL; 3=Both ABE and ESL

Mary was assessed in reading and math using the TABE 9-10 and found to be basic skills deficient in both. The category of assessment was ABE. Therefore, data elements 702-715 will be used to track achievement in the Reading functional area (for up to 3 years if necessary). Data elements 716-729 will be used to track achievement in the Math functional area (for up to 3 years). Data elements 730-743 can be used to track achievement in an additional functioning area. As long as Mary increases one EFL in either reading or math within one year, she is considered a positive outcome.

First Functional Area WIASRD Items 701—715	Second Functional Area WIASRD Items 716—729	Third Functional Area WIASRD Items 730—743
701 – Category of Assessment 702 – Type of Assessment Test 703 – Functional Area 704 – Date for Pre-Test 705 – Pre-Test Score 706 – Educational Functioning Level 707 – Date for Post-Test (Year 1) 708 – Post-Test Score (Year 1) 709 – Educ. Functioning Level (Year 1) 710 – Date for Post-Test (Year 2) 711 – Post-Test Score (Year 2) 712 – Educ. Functioning Level (Year 2) 713 – Date for Post-Test (Year 3) 714 – Post-Test Score (Year 3) 715 – Educ. Functioning Level (Year 3)	716 – Type of Assessment Test ↓ 729 – EFL (Year 3)*	730 – Type of Assessment Test ↓ 743 – EFL (Year 3)
	<p>*If Math was the second functional area identified for a basic skills deficient youth, WIASRD Items 716—729 would be utilized to track assessment results and the associated dates for up to three years.</p> <p>Item 718 would be the pre-test date for the second functional area in the same way Item 704 is the pre-test date for the first functional area.</p>	

## 6. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- What happens if there is no pre-test available within 6 months before FYS and a pre-test is not given within 60 days of first youth service? Is there a penalty? Similarly, what if the local program doesn't realize they are lacking the pre-test until the anniversary date; what should they do?** *ETA's policy is that youth should be pre-tested within 60 days of the date of first youth service (FYS). If they do not pre-test within the 60 days, the only penalty is that the youth will have less time to achieve an educational gain. If the youth does not post-test at all before the anniversary date and the youth is basic skills deficient, they automatically fail the measure for that year. If the youth remains in the program, they should be pre-tested as soon as possible; otherwise, they will continue to fail the measure for the second year if they remain in the program for a full second year. The bottom line is to pre-test as soon as possible, even if it's past the 60-day timeframe. Ideally, states have in place a system to notify staff that a pre-test has not been given in order to prompt staff to do so.*
- If a basic skills deficient youth achieved a Lit/Num gain within their first year of participation but exited before their one-year anniversary date, would they count in the measure?** *Yes. A youth who is basic skills deficient is included in the Lit/Num denominator in their first year, regardless of when they exit. In this scenario, the youth would be in both the numerator and denominator. (However, they are included in the numerator and denominator based on the anniversary date (FYS + 365), not the exit date.) A youth would not be in the denominator a second time unless they completed a second full year.*
- If a youth remains in the program or a partner program after one full year, does the youth have to pre-test again?** *No. If a youth remains in the program, or a partner program, after one full year, the post-test of the first year becomes the pre-test for the second participation year (and so on through the third year). If no post-test was given for the first year, the pre-test for the first year remains the pre-test for the second year.*
- If a youth is not proficient in English, must he/she be assessed in literacy and numeracy?** *Yes. TEGL 17-05 requires all out-of-school youth to be assessed in basic reading/writing and math within 60 days following the date of FYS, which includes Limited English Proficient (LEP) youth. States and local programs with questions regarding testing LEP youth should consult with the publishers of approved tests to identify appropriate assessment instruments.*
- If an out-of-school youth is reported as basic skills deficient, is it necessary to report the pre-test EFL scores as well?** *Yes. Youth reported as basic skills deficient should have their pre-test EFL scores reported. Reporting a youth as basic skills deficient in WIASRD Element #130 (coded 1 for YES) is the "trigger" for inclusion in the measure unless an EFL above 6 is recorded (i.e., an EFL of 7 or 8 would indicate the youth is not basic skills deficient). Thus, the information should always be*

recorded and, in the case of basic skills proficient youth, local staff who do not record the 7 or 8 EFL will unwittingly be placing these youth in the denominator, translating into an automatic negative outcome for a youth who should not have even been included in the calculation in the first place.

6. **Is there a need to test youth for basic skills deficiency even if the youth attends or attended college?** *Yes. All out-of-school youth must be tested for basic skills deficiency (see previous definition for out-of-school youth). Prior attendance in post-secondary education does not preclude being basic skills deficient.*
7. **Are there alternate testing/methods/strategies for Literacy/Numeracy as it pertains to youth with disabilities?** *Yes. When assessing youth with disabilities, reasonable accommodations must be provided. It is important that accommodations be carefully selected based on the knowledge, skill or ability being tested because an accommodation may be valid for assessing some skills but not others. ETA's full policy on assessing youth with disabilities for Literacy/Numeracy is within TEGL 17-05 under the section "Testing Youth with Disabilities." In addition, ETA released specific guidance on "Increasing the Enrollment and Improving Services with Youth with Disabilities" through TEGL 31-10. This policy guidance includes a list of organizations and resources that can assist youth providers with the accurate assessment of youth who present with disabilities – <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL31-10ACC.pdf>.*
8. **What is a "success" for Literacy/Numeracy?** *A positive outcome would include youth who achieved an educational functioning level gain. Overall success would be basic skills proficiency; in other words, youth are no longer basic skills deficient and, therefore, no longer included in the measure.*
9. **What is the appropriate end date for participation years for the Literacy/Numeracy measure?** *Participation years end on the anniversary date. For example, if the date of FYS is 6/15/11, then the youth must post-test on or before 6/15/12. For this youth's second year in the program, the youth must post-test on or before 6/15/13.*
10. **How do we report Literacy/Numeracy? What are the cohorts and time periods?** *Simply put, the Literacy/Numeracy cohorts match the participant cohorts, which is why it is a "real time measure." The date ranges for reporting cohorts refer to one of the first three anniversary dates falling within the date range. Thus, a basic skills deficient, out-of-school youth with a date of FYS of 7/1/11 would not be included in the measure until 7/2/12 is within the report period. For the four quarters for which 7/2/12 is within the report period, the state would report on the youth's first participation year Lit/Num outcomes. Then, for the four quarters for which 7/2/13 (the second anniversary date) is within the report period, the state would report on the youth's second participation year Lit/Num outcome. Lastly, for the four quarters for which 7/2/14 (the third anniversary date) is within the report period, the state would report on the youth's third participation year Lit/Num outcome.*
11. **If local staff select 1 for YES on Element #130 (Basic Skills Deficiency) but the L/N pre-test reveals they are not basic skills deficient, will the youth still end up in the calculation?** *No. Reference the flowchart in Section 5 and also the answer to Question #5 above. When Element #130 is coded as YES with an EFL pre-test of 7 or 8, this will result in the youth not being included in the measure.*
12. **If during a youth's second year of WIA participation, they post-test and it's a positive gain but then they exit before completing the full second year, are they counted in the measure?** *No. Youth must complete the full second year to be included in the measure a second time. If they exit prior to completion of the full year, they are excluded. ETA's intention is to hold programs accountable for helping youth achieve a gain but recognizes youth are highly mobile and may not remain in the program. Therefore, holding programs accountable for second or third year gains for a partial year of participation would be unfair.*
13. **If a youth is no longer receiving WIA youth services but, due to the requirement for a common exit date, the youth isn't exited because they're receiving services from a partner program – such as the WIA Adult program – would the youth still be in the L/N measure?** *Yes, as long as the youth has not exited, the youth will be included in the L/N measure through their third participation year (in a youth or partner program) unless they are post-tested as proficient in the area(s) of prior deficiency (an EFL of 7 or 8).*