

The

# Adult Basic Classroom

*For Florida Adult Basic  
Education Practitioners*

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**What is the TABE and why is it administered to ABE students? What skills does it measure? How can we interpret the resulting test score? How can we use the test results to help ABE students in the classroom?**

The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is a frequently used assessment instrument for adult students. Editions 7 & 8 have five main subtest areas: reading, mathematics computation, applied mathematics, language, and spelling. There are also five main levels that target specific grade ranges: L (Literacy) 0-1.9, E (Easy) 1.6-3.9, M (Medium) 3.6-6.9, D (Difficult) 6.6-8.9, and A (Advanced) 8.6-12.9. A simple and short Locator Test determines the appropriate level of TABE to be administered to the student. ABE students are usually placed in the L, E, M, and D levels. At each level, there are two forms of the test, a pre-test and a posttest. The pre-test is administered for diagnostic purposes, identifying weak areas which the student can remediate. The posttest is administered to show the progress the student has achieved after undergoing remediation.

## The TABE Scores

The basic score, or scale score, consists of units of a scale that are expressed as numbers with a range from 0 through 999. This score is the most accurate means of evaluating a student's performance on the test. However, the most commonly used score with ABE students is the grade equivalent score. This score is intended to indicate an achievement

level related to typical educational structures in elementary and secondary schools. For example, a score of 7.6 would indicate the achievement level of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student in his 6<sup>th</sup> month of the school year. The grade equivalent score does not have much meaning in nongraded programs like adult education, but it is the most easily understood reference point for adult learners, teachers, counselors, and even legislators. Therefore, grade levels are used for instructional purposes in the ABE classroom, and it is the teacher's goal to help students raise their grade levels. Raising grade levels shows progress and earns literacy completion points for the school.

As an ABE teacher, you may choose to use both types of scores.

## The TABE Objectives

The TABE objectives contain content that is considered relevant for students' educational growth. The items on the test measure whether or not the students have mastered the particular content. Most of the skills listed in the Florida Adult Basic Education Frameworks correlate to the TABE content. This factor makes the use of the TABE beneficial for the ABE teacher. Although the different levels of the test (L, E, M, and D) have their own objectives, the levels have many similarities. For example, the read-

ing section of each level covers the interpretation of graphic information, words in context, recalling information (details), constructing meaning (main ideas and drawing conclusions), and evaluating meaning (author's purpose, fact or opinion, and predicting outcomes).

The math computations subtest of each level measures the students' ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, decimals, and fractions – increasing in difficulty as the test goes to a higher level. Percents and integers are also included in some tests. The computational skills are those one encounters in everyday life, like following a recipe, dealing with money, and balancing a checkbook.

The applied mathematics section requires the examinee to apply basic math skills and use problem-solving strategies to solve real-world situations. The TABE objectives in this subtest include numeration, number theory, data interpretation, pre-algebra, algebra, measurement, geometry, computation in context, and estimation.

In the language subtest of each level, the examinee is required to analyze different types of writing and decide what is wrong in the written material. The writings contain adult interests, and they use forms like business letters and job reports. The

language content is divided into six parts: usage, sentence formation, paragraph development, capitalization, punctuation, and writing conventions (quotation marks, letter parts, and possessives).

## Individual Diagnostic Profiles

After scoring a student's performance, you can use the diagnostic profile provided by the TABE. The profile lists objectives and skills measured by the test, and it reveals mastery or non-mastery of the specific items. It provides this information by listing the number of items in a skill area, the number of items the student got correct, and a mastery summary. Looking at this information, you can determine those specific areas that need remediation and can develop an appropriate and meaningful study plan.

## The TABE Format

All of the skill areas listed in the TABE can also be included in other standardized tests that measure ability in reading, math, and language. However, since the TABE is used in most ABE classrooms, you should be familiar with its particular format. For example, in the reading section, synonyms and antonyms are used to measure vocabulary skills. However, the format of the test requires the students to "use the context" in making their selections. So, the students should have instruction and practice with identifying words in context.

The language subtest uses an integrated approach or technique. That means the language skills are mixed together in the content. In the previous TABE editions, the skills were more distinct. The directions would instruct the student to look for capitalization errors, punctuation errors, errors with complete sentences,

etc. In TABE 7 & 8 and 9 & 10, the skills are mixed, and this integration makes the test more difficult. To overcome this difficulty, you should make sure the students have practice with the skills in the same format as they will encounter on the test.

## Instructional Materials

There are several publishing companies that have developed instructional materials that specifically correlate to the TABE. These are excellent resources because they include the same kind of content as is found on the TABE, and they also provide test-taking practice in the same format. This is important for ABE teachers who use the TABE pre - and posttests to earn literacy completion points.

McGraw-Hill/Contemporary, Steck-Vaughn, PACE, and CTB/McGraw Hill are publishing companies that have excellent instructional materials that relate to the TABE content and format.

## The Study Plan

Using the student's individual diagnostic profile, you can identify the specific skills that require remediation. Then, you should select instructional materials that teach those skills and provide practice for reinforcement. In this way, each student will have his or her individualized study plan.

Make sure the students see the connection between their personal goals and the study plan. The plan allows them to work towards some short-term goals, that is, achieving success in improving their weak areas. This success will enable them to eventually achieve their long-term goal which may be getting a GED, occupational training, or a job.

## TABE 9 & 10

TABE 9 & 10 also has the five levels with pre - and posttests and the five main subtests as in 7 & 8. However, the new edition has additional, optional tests: Language Mechanics, Vocabulary, and Spelling. The specific grade ranges in the levels differ slightly from 7 & 8. The ranges in 9 & 10 are: (E) 2.0-3.9, (M) 4.0-5.9, (D) 6.0-8.9, and (A) 9.0-12.0.

The 9 & 10 edition has updated the content by adding more references to current trends and employment opportunities. For example, its graphic sections contain computer usage, web sites, job fairs, and job postings.

For students working toward a GED, 9 & 10 has three advanced-level tests: Science & Social Studies, Algebra/Geometry, and Writing. These new tests will give you more complete information about how well your adult students will perform on the subject and content areas contained in the 2002 GED.

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