

FIVE STEPS TO GOOD ASSESSMENT PRACTICES – WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED TO TEST

The following steps are important as you select, administer, and interpret assessment instruments for your client/customer. Within each step are some questions and issues you should address. The column on the right lists the page numbers in *Testing and Assessment: A Guide to Good Practices for Workforce Investment Professionals (2006)* which can be downloaded from <http://www.onetcenter.org/guides.html> or <http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEN/ten2007/TEN21-07a1.pdf>. The information on the listed pages can provide you with more comprehensive information on the topic. As you go through certain stages of the process, you may be more comfortable having assistance from a consultant with assessment experience and credentials.

Step 1: Know and describe your client(s).

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Identify important characteristics such as age, education level, work experience, gender, race/ethnicity, cultural background, primary language, etc.	3-6
Determine the stage in the career process of your client/customer -- exploring possibilities? just starting a career? in transition? changing occupations? transferring to a new location? wanting to work for another employer?	4-1

Step 2: Specify the kind(s) of assessment(s) your client needs. What do you need to know or verify about them?

	Page #
Identify what you want to know or measure about your clients -- interests? work readiness? teamwork? computer skills? finger dexterity? etc.	3; 2-5; 4-1; 4-8
Determine if the information you want is available elsewhere -- previous records? high school tests? training records? You may not need to administer another assessment if the information is available, relevant, and current.	2-4; 4-1

Step 3: Review possible assessments and select the ones that seem most appropriate for further review.

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Obtain and look at the general information about the instruments by studying a sample test, interpretation manuals, professional reviews, score reports, etc., to determine if it seems appropriate for your clients/customers. Consider such things as reading level, language, mode of administration (e.g. paper/pencil; computer delivered), mode of scoring (self; automated).	2-6; 3-6; 5-1; 6-7; 7-1

Study the technical information to be sure that there is strong research support that assures that assessment measures what is needed and you can use and interpret the assessment results in the way that you want with the client/customer.	3-2; 3-3; 3-5; 3-7; 3-9; 5-7; 8-3
Seek information from the assessment's publisher, in test reviews, or from other users to see if there is any indication of cultural bias and adverse impact.	2-4; 2-6; 2-7; 2-8; 2-9; 5-1; 5-5; 5-7; 7-11
Determine that the assessment is at the correct reading level, in an appropriate language, and uses an acceptable administration procedure (e.g. paper/pencil or computer delivered; self administered or test administrator).	5-3; 5-5; 5-7; 6-7
Review the costs and administration requirements. Partner with other agencies or institutions if beneficial to do so.	2-3; 5-3; 8-1
Determine if clients/customers have documented needs for test accommodations and determine if the accommodation will diminish your ability to interpret the results.	2-10; 6-6

Step 4: Administer assessments based on specified procedures.

	Page #
Verify that your education and training background qualifies you to administer the assessment. Partner with other agencies or institutions who may have trained administrators.	6-1; 6-2; 8-3
Only use instruments that meet client/customer needs, administration requirements, and technical strengths.	5; 3-3; 3-5; 3-6
Keep high stakes instruments secure, and respect copyrights.	6-8

Step 5: Provide feedback and interpretation of the results to the client/customer.

	Page #
Interpret the results only as far as the supporting research suggests. Don't over interpret.	3-5; 7-2
Be sure the client/customer understands what the assessment results mean, even if the assessment report is computer- or self-generated.	7-5; 7-3
Be sure that the client/customer understands that assessment results are only estimates of what is true of them.	5; 3-2; 3-4; 8-2
Honor the privacy of the client by keeping results confidential and secure.	6-9; 7-8

Selected Assessments on Computer Literacy

Private assessments and/or certifications

- **ETS iSkills** www.ets.org
- **Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC³) (Certiport)**
<http://www.certiport.com/Portal/desktopdefault.aspx?tabid=229&roleid=102>
- **CAT1: Computer Assessment & Tutorial Online** <http://www.cat1.org/>
- **Learning.Com TechLiteracy Assessment:** <http://www.learning.com/tla/index.htm>
- **Brainbench Computer Fundamentals (Win XP) certification**
<http://www.brainbench.com/xml/bb/common/testcenter/taketest.xml?testId=1545>

Self Assessments

- **Online self rating** (adapted from *MnSCU/U of M Distance Learning Initiative*):
<http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/computer/GeneOperation.html>
- **Self-report checklist** <http://daphne.palomar.edu/lchen/ComLit/Assessment.pdf>
- <http://www.topsy.org/InfoLitAssess.html>
- **Moraine Valley Computer Skills Self-Assessment**
<http://online.morainevalley.edu/FirstTimeUsers/ComputerSkills.htm>
- **Carroll Community College Skills Assessment**
http://carrollcc.edu/courses/online/assessment/skills_assessment.asp (various skills from computer operating to searching)
- **Axiom Computer Literacy Assessment**
<http://www.axiomsoftware.com/products/discovery-computer.php?uc=1,180>
Broad range of assessment items from programming to web searching

Leveraging Educational Institution Assessments

- **Stevenson University** http://www.vjc.edu/academics/info-tech/literacy_test/index.asp
- **Tacoma Community College (WA)**
<http://www.tacomacc.edu/resourcesforstudents/counselingandadvisingcenter/assessment/computerliteracyassessment.aspx>
- **North Central State College—Mansfield, Ohio**
<http://www.ncstatecollege.edu/cms/student-success-center/assessments.html#CIS>

Selected Career/Work Readiness Credentials

- **National Career Readiness Credential (WorkKeys-based)**
<http://www.act.org/certificate/index.html>
- **Equipped for the Future (EFF) National Work Readiness Credential**
<http://eff.cls.utk.edu/workreadiness/>
- **SkillsUSA Workplace Readiness Certificate**
<http://www.skillsusa.org/educators/nocti.shtml>
- **CASAS Workforce Skills Certification System (WSCS)**
<https://www.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showContent&MapID=2057>
- **Learning Resource, Inc. (LRI) Work Readiness Skills (WRS) and Workplace Success Skills (WSS)**
http://www.learning-resources.com/aprogram_0.cfm

Using a Checklist to Assist Your Decision-Making

As you go through the process of selecting an assessment instrument, it may be helpful to use the following checklist to help you organize information in a purposeful, systematic, and objective way. You will need to look at the information made available by the publisher, read instrument reviews, check with your colleagues, and even share the instrument with your students or clients to gather their opinions in order to make a comfortable decision about which instrument might be best to use.

Rating Checklist

For each instrument you are considering, conduct a review and complete the checklist. Room is provided on the checklist to add some additional criteria that may be particularly pertinent and important to you. If a criterion is not applicable to your situation, ignore it. When you are done, add up the number of outstanding, acceptable, and not acceptable ratings to see how the instrument matched up to the criteria and when compared to other instruments.

Instrument Name: _____

Publisher: _____

Evaluation Criteria	Rating		
	Outstanding	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
Instrument Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The assessment measures what is needed ▪ Instrument should provide helpful information for individuals like my customers/clients 			
Client Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instrument was developed on a group similar to my customers/clients ▪ Vocabulary, language, and reading level are appropriate to my customers/clients 			
Technical Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of technical information (such as reliability and validity) are strong ▪ Score interpretations are supported by research ▪ Supportive documentation is available and provided by the publisher (such as technical reports and research studies) ▪ Technical reviews by unbiased and credible persons provide supportive information ▪ Information from colleagues and customers and clients who have used the instrument support its use ▪ My personal review of the instrument supports its use ▪ Norms are representative of my customers/clients 			
Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administration format is suitable to my customers/clients (paper/pencil; computer; Internet) ▪ I have qualifications and necessary materials to properly administer this instrument ▪ The administration directions are clearly specified 			

Scoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scoring format is easy, accurate, and appropriate ▪ Scoring process minimizes errors ▪ Feedback of results is timely and useful ▪ Procedure for storing results matches my organizational capabilities 			
Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Score report is clear and helpful ▪ Amount and kind of information is appropriate to the needs of my customers/clients (not too much or too little) ▪ I am qualified to interpret the results 			
Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost is in line with benefit ▪ Costs are within my budget 			
Other			
TOTAL			

Simple things you can do to the improve working conditions in adult education!

All Practitioners

- Join the Working Conditions Committee to organize for living wages, health and other benefits, stable workloads, and workspaces conducive to productive work and learning.
- Raise the issue of working conditions in professional groups and organizations, in DESE task forces and focus groups.
- Write about working conditions – your experience, your efforts to make change, etc., for *Field Notes*.
- Nominate a program for the Working Conditions Award. Work toward being a nominee.
- Talk with your students about the working conditions of their teachers.
- Advocate with legislators around the need for working conditions that enable a quality adult education system.
- Discuss the findings of the MCAE Working Conditions Survey with colleagues.
- Contribute your thoughts and reactions to the Survey findings to the MCAE website.
- Help us maintain a Working Conditions Facebook Page.

Teachers

- Collect/document stories of the working conditions of teachers in the field.
- Collect/document stories of why teachers have left the field.
- Hold a teacher/counselor meet-up in your community to discuss working conditions.

Directors

- Collect/document stories about the efforts program directors have made to improve conditions and the challenges they've faced.
- Educate funders (private and public) about the need to support improved working conditions.
- Use the Working Conditions self-assessment tool as a staff to evaluate program strengths and weaknesses.

For more information, contact the Working Conditions Committee or visit www.mcae.net.

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Teachers' Working Conditions

*From "The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers" by
Cristine Smith and Judy Hofer*

Teachers' working conditions are largely defined by "environmental factors" that affect their ability to do their jobs well. These factors include the physical facilities where teachers work, the amount of time and support they have to do their jobs, and the training or development opportunities they have. Although these conditions exist within teachers' programs, they are greatly influenced by the policies and practices of the local, state, and national ABE delivery and professional development systems in which these programs operate. We identified five categories of factors that most influence teachers' ability to do their jobs well in adult basic education:

1. **Access to resources.** These include the resources that affect how teachers do their jobs, such as classroom and program facilities, and access to materials and technology.
2. **Access to professional development and information.** These include opportunities for teachers to acquire the knowledge and information they need, primarily through professional development and through access to written and electronic material that help them better understand their classrooms, their programs, and their field.
3. **Access to colleagues and program directors.** These include opportunities and mechanisms that allow teachers to talk to and get feedback from those within their program, their state, and in the larger field of adult basic education.
4. **Access to decision-making.** These include opportunities and mechanisms for teachers to participate in improving the quality of services that students receive, particularly through program policies and practices.
5. **Access to a well-supported job.** These factors include sufficient working hours to complete all of the teaching, program, and other tasks required of teachers; paid prep and professional development time; job stability and benefits.