

**Analysis of California ESL and ABE Learners
at Low Educational Functioning Levels
(2001-2002)**

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CASAS

Introduction

This document examines California ESL and ABE learners who enter instructional programs at the lowest educational functioning levels. The analysis focuses on learners enrolled in WIA Title II funded programs that qualified for the NRS Federal Tables for the 2001-2002 program year.

In the first section, ESL Program Characteristics and Results, the characteristics and performance of ESL learners at lower educational functioning levels are detailed. Tables 1 through 4b provide supporting data.

In the second section, ABE Program Characteristics and Results, the characteristics and performance of ABE learners at lower educational functioning levels are presented and analyzed. Data Tables 5 through 6b provide supporting data.

Section One: ESL Program Characteristics and Results

ESL Beginning Literacy

Reading pre- and post-test data were used to illustrate the impact of adult education on reading skill development. Student skill level at program entry was determined using a CASAS pretest. To determine learning gains and level advancement, students remaining in their program at time of update were administered a post-test.

Among ESL learners with paired data and qualifying for the NRS Federal Tables, 4.1 percent entered their program at the Beginning Literacy level. Learners functioning at this level score below 181 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

Listening/Speaking

- Functions minimally, if at all, in English
- Communicates through gestures and a few isolated words

Reading/Writing

- May not be literate in any language
- Employment options restricted to routine entry level positions requiring no oral or written skills

Students entering the program with extremely limited skills, (Beginning Literacy level of listening, speaking, reading, and writing), 88.0 percent advanced at least one instructional level. They were now able to ask and respond to basic learned phrases, recognize and write letters and numbers, write their own name and address, and handle routine entry-level jobs where tasks are easily demonstrated.

ESL Beginning

Among ESL learners with paired data and qualifying for the NRS Federal Tables, 24.8 percent entered their program at the Beginning level. Learners functioning at this level score between 181 and 200 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

Listening/Speaking

- Can function in a limited way or with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs
- Can communicate using basic learned phrases and sentences

Reading/Writing

- Can read and write letters and numbers
- Can write basic personal information on simplified forms

Pre- and post-test data indicated that 67.2 entering at the Beginning level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. They went from minimal skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing to being able to complete the following tasks: Understand simple learned phrases easily; read and interpret simple material on familiar topics; interpret simple directions, signs, and menus; and, handle entry-level jobs requiring simple oral and written communication.

See Table 1 for a summary of reading test performance for learners with paired test data. See Tables 2a-4b for a summary of ethnicity, age, years of schooling, and additional reading test information for all ESL learners at the Beginning Literacy, Beginning, and Intermediate Low levels.

Table 1 –Mean Reading Learning Gains for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Reading Score Range	Pretest Mean	Learning Gain	
		Mean	<u>N</u>
<180	173.6	22.3	8,485
181-200	193.0	11.1	49,400
201-210	205.3	9.6	66,721

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Table 2a –Ethnicity for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	American Indian or Alaskan Native (%)	Asian (%)	Black or African American (%)	Hispanic or Latino (%)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (%)	White (%)
	ESL Beginning Literacy	2.7	18.2	1.0	69.0	4.0
ESL Beginning	2.3	14.8	0.8	72.4	4.1	5.6
ESL Intermediate Low	2.4	16.0	0.7	70.9	4.0	6.0

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Table 2b –Reading Learning Gains by Ethnic Group for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Totals
	ESL Beginning Literacy	24.7	19.9	19.0	22.8	24.4	22.3
ESL Beginning	12.8	10.5	12.8	11.1	10.7	13.2	11.1
ESL Intermediate Low	10.4	9.1	12.9	9.5	9.7	11.1	9.6

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Table 3a – Age Distribution for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	16-18 %	19-24 %	25-44 %	45-59 %	60+ %
ESL Beginning Literacy	5.7	21.8	43.8	17.4	11.3
ESL Beginning	5.8	24.0	48.8	14.0	7.4
ESL Intermediate Low	4.2	22.0	55.5	13.0	5.3

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Table 3b – Reading Learning Gains by Age for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-59	60+	Totals
ESL Beginning Literacy	22.2	23.6	24.0	20.4	18.1	22.3
ESL Beginning	11.4	11.4	11.5	10.4	9.4	11.1
ESL Intermediate Low	9.7	9.7	10.0	8.6	7.8	9.6

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Table 4a – Years of Schooling for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	6 or Less %	7 or more %
ESL Beginning Literacy	52.2	47.8
ESL Beginning	38.0	62.0
ESL Intermediate Low	24.4	75.6

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Table 4b – Reading Learning Gains by Years of Schooling for ESL/ESL-Cit Learners

Educational Functioning Level	6 or Less	7 or more	Totals
ESL Beginning Literacy	19.8	26.7	22.3
ESL Beginning	9.7	12.3	11.1
ESL Intermediate Low	7.6	10.4	9.6

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Section Two: ABE Program Characteristics and Results

ABE Beginning Literacy

Among ABE learners with paired data and qualifying for the NRS Federal Tables, 5.4 percent entered their program at the Beginning Literacy level. Learners functioning at this level score below 201 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Very limited ability to read or write
- Can provide very basic personal information such as address and phone number in written form
- Those at the upper end of the scale range can read and write letters, numbers, and simple words related to immediate needs

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 52.4 percent of learners entering at the Beginning Literacy level scored at least one level higher on the CASAS scale at post-test. In other words, among those who entered their program with very limited reading and writing skills could now fill out simple forms, write a simple phone message, calculate simple mathematical operations, and handle entry level jobs involving some simple written communication.

ABE Beginning Basic Education

Approximately 8.3 percent of ABE learners with paired data and qualifying for the NRS Federal Tables, entered their program at the Beginning level. Learners functioning at this level score between 201 and 210 on the CASAS scale and are characterized using these and other CASAS Descriptors:

- Can complete simple forms requiring personal information
- Can calculate a single mathematical operation when numbers are provided
- Can read and interpret simple signs, maps, and menus

Using pre- and post-test reading scores as indicators of learner progress, 74.0 percent of learners entering at the Beginning level scored at the next highest level on the CASAS scale at post-test. In other words, among those who entered their program with limited reading, writing, and math skills could now perform basic reading, writing, and computational tasks, interpret charts, graphs, labels and payroll stubs, and handle jobs and/or job training that involve following basic oral or written instructions.

See Table 5 for a summary of reading test performance of ABE learners at the Beginning Literacy and Beginning levels. See Tables 6a-7b for a summary of age, years of schooling, and additional reading test information for all ABE learners at the Beginning Literacy and Beginning Basic Education.

Table 5 – Mean Reading Learning Gains for ABE/ASE Learners

Reading Score Range	Learning Gain		N
	Pretest Mean	Mean	
<200	183.3	12.4	2,401
201-210	206.3	13.9	2,853

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Table 6a – Age Distribution for ABE/ASE Learners

Educational Functioning Level	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-59	60+
	%	%	%	%	%
ABE Beginning Literacy	8.6	18.4	49.4	18.7	4.9
ABE Beginning Basic Education	16.7	25.6	43.7	11.5	2.5

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Table 6b – Reading Learning Gains by Age for ABE/ASE Learners

Educational Functioning Level	16-18	19-24	25-44	45-59	60+	Total
ABE Beginning Literacy	24.7	16.4	12.0	9.6	7.3	12.4
ABE Beginning Basic Education	13.5	13.5	14.5	13.8	9.3	13.9

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Table 7a – Years of Schooling for ABE/ASE learners

<u>Educational Functioning Level</u>	<u>6 or Less</u> <u>%</u>	<u>7 or more</u> <u>%</u>
ABE Beginning Literacy	25.1	74.9
ABE Beginning Basic Education	12.1	87.9

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Table 7b – Reading Learning Gains by Years of Schooling for ABE/ASE Learners

<u>Educational Functioning Level</u>	<u>6 or Less</u>	<u>7 or more</u>	<u>Total</u>
ABE Beginning Literacy	11.5	16.6	12.4
ABE Beginning Basic Education	9.7	15.2	13.9

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