

## **CASAS – Becoming a Household Name**

CASAS is the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System that was created in California and has been adopted here in Minnesota. I have been working with the Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium to assist our fourteen partners in implementing this new state mandated assessment process. CASAS is used to assess each ABE and ESL student's language level and to record their progress as they receive instruction in our schools. Student test scores are submitted to the State of Minnesota electronically via software such as LiteracyPro.

### **How does CASAS testing work?**

#### **Initial CASAS Assessment**

The initial assessment is the Form 20 Appraisal for ESL students and the Form 30 for ABE students. This test is timed at 25 minutes and is pretty difficult. Many students only answer a few questions. It is important that the students understand the test is hard and it is okay if they cannot answer all the questions. They should not be nervous and everyone will pass! This test is just to find out what level they are at. It is important to prepared students for CASAS testing to help buffer any anxiety they may feel about testing. They should also know that CASAS is a tool for both teacher and student to focus in on what they need to learn.

#### **Pre-test**

From the Form 20/30 Appraisals we can determine which pre-test a student will take. The options are:

- Level A Form 31/32
- Level B Form 33/34
- Level C Form 35/36
- Level D Form 37/38

Either after a short break or at the next class period students will take the pre-test for their level. They should be given 45-60 minutes for this test. Based upon the raw score or number of questions a student answers correctly, we can determine the equivalent CASAS scale score. The scale score is recorded in LiteracyPro for government reporting.

#### **Post-test**

In roughly 70-100 hours, or at the end of the class quarter / semester, we will post-test each student. The post-test is identical to the pre-test as both tests cover the same competencies. At post-test time we hope to see some improvement in each student's CASAS scaled score. CASAS suggests that a five-point gain on the scale can be expected after 100 hours of instruction.

### **Improving for the post-test**

We do not recommend creating an entirely new curriculum to cater to CASAS. However, the competencies that CASAS covers are all important parts of survival English. It is helpful for both students and teachers to see from the pre-test what has been mastered at each level and what still needs work before it is time to post-test.

There are two tools CASAS provides to help us focus our study and instruction. Each shipment of CASAS comes with a scoring packet containing answer keys, a class profile and an individual student profile for each level of CASAS test. Each question of the test is tied to a specific CASAS competency. Based upon the questions that students answer incorrectly, profiles can be made. A class profile can be quickly created to diagnose which competencies an entire class is having the most trouble with. This way, teachers can focus on just a few things before the post-test, instead of trying to cover everything in the test. For students who are more invested in their own learning, an individual student profile can be created. Here, a student will see which competencies they need to work on most.

You will find that students really like CASAS testing. They want to know what they need to work on and they feel good about the progress they have made when they see their scores improving!

In future articles I will share with you how to find curriculum to help teach the more challenging competencies. I will also take a look at how post-testing is going and share with you my experiences testing within the Saint Paul Community Literacy Consortium, as well as the experiences I have learned of from other consortia throughout the state. If you have any questions or comments regarding CASAS, please feel free to contact me at the Northside Learning Center. Phone: (612) 377-6432 Email: [nbjorn@theMLC.org](mailto:nbjorn@theMLC.org)